

**Shearwell  
Data**

**Livestock Systems**

Working to help the livestock farmer

# LIVESTOCK NEWS



**PRIZE DRAW - Win our  
New ShearWeigh weigh  
head and load bars**

**Forest Range  
Merinos**

**Missives from  
Minnesota**

**NEW  
Metal Cattle  
EID Tag**



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Welcome to the second edition of Shearwell Data's Livestock News. At a time when livestock prices are at an all-time high and following a back end that provided abundant grass growth. It is certainly one as such that I have never experienced, having taken three cuts of silage 1,000ft above sea level and managing to finish all my lambs off grass.

With calving having just started we can only hope for a good spring and being able to turn cows and calves out as soon as possible after calving. With the straw prices where they are, we certainly do not want to be using any more than is essential. Ewes are in very good condition and gave a 191% scan, so we will be busy very shortly.

On the Shearwell Data front a long awaited day has arrived, as we are the first company worldwide to offer an official revolutionary cattle metal EID tag. This has been

an ambition for a number of years and is testament to the expertise we have in-house to develop something that no other manufacturer has been able to!! We know many people like the metal Ketchum tag for its good retention and with this in mind we have based the design on that.

In addition, we are launching The ShearWeigh, our own British-made electronic weigh head and load bars. Fast, accurate weights delivered in a robustly designed casing.

Combine these two new products with our new family of Combi 3000 range of tags and you will see we have been busy getting all of these products to market.

Here's hoping you all have a good lambing and calving season, with plenty of grass in front of them at turnout.

**Richard Webber FRAgS** *Director, Shearwell Data Ltd*



Contact the team: 01643 841611



[www.shearwell.co.uk](http://www.shearwell.co.uk)



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## FEBRUARY 2021 PRIZE DRAW WINNERS



### FIRST PRIZE

Mr Jones, Conwy, Wales was the lucky winner of a year's supply of ear tags.

*"I am delighted to have won the tag reader. Shearwell have always provided a first class service"*

Sally Glennie

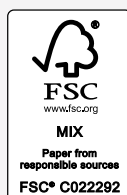


### SECOND PRIZE

Sally Glennie, Aberdeenshire was the lucky winner of a Shearwell Stick Reader

**Would you like to enter our new Prize Draw?**  
Details on page 21

Front cover image credit:  
Exmoor Hill Farm Project (EHFP), Steve Guscott



This newsletter is printed on an FSC® paper, using vegetable based inks. Please recycle after use.

Image at top page 3 - Webber family - left to right - Sam, Carlyne, Emma Thorne, James and Richard Webber.  
Images bottom page 3 - Historical images of Stick Reader, Weigh Crate, Stock Recorder, Webber family and staff with first tag machine and first Shearwell EID Crate with digital display.

For more information please email, [newsletter@shearwell.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@shearwell.co.uk)  
Editor: Julie Edwards. Design and Content: Diana Murphy

Shearwell Data, Putham, Wheddon Cross, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 7AS

Contact the team: 01643 841611 [www.shearwell.co.uk](http://www.shearwell.co.uk)



Welcome to the Spring edition of Livestock News. This is our second edition and very much an evolving publication – so your feedback is always very welcome. With lambing and calving well underway, the teams here are working hard to get your orders out to you.

The Shearwell R&D team has been busy working on some exciting new products which we are delighted to launch in this edition to our dedicated customer base, ahead of any national promotional campaigns. After a number of years of development, significant investment by the Shearwell business and on-farm trials we are excited to introduce the new Metal Cattle EID tag. Following in the footsteps of the market leading Shearwell SET Tag, the Metal Cattle EID tag has demonstrated excellent retention and EID capabilities. Shearwell Data is the first company anywhere in the world to offer an official metal EID tag for cattle.

In this edition we are also launching the new ShearWeigh weigh head, app and load bars. Quick and easy to use, accurate, robust and competitively priced – the ShearWeigh has been designed by the team at Shearwell and trialled on a number of farms with great success. Don't miss the opportunity to enter our prize draw to win a ShearWeigh and load bars (rrp £1,695).

The Turbo Tagger continues to prove extremely popular with sheep farmers – whether you are tagging with breeding pairs or slaughter SET tags, the Turbo Tagger makes light work of this procedure. You can buy loaded cartridges or strips which can be loaded into drums.

In this edition we hear from a range of commentators from as far afield as the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Dan Persons from Minnesota discusses the lamb market and feed costs, whilst the Emmersons from Forest Range Station, Central Otago provide an insightful overview of their Merino sheep farming business. They discuss how their use of genetic breeding technology has enabled them to produce and market ultra-fine wool to overseas markets which are used in exclusive product ranges.



Our Livestock News magazine is distributed throughout the UK. If you would like to advertise or appear in our next edition please email [newsletter@shearwell.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@shearwell.co.uk)



Norman Bagley, Head of Policy at the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS) discusses the opportunities offered by DNA analysis in the food supply chain. We also hear from Chris Dodds, Executive Secretary of the Livestock Auctioneers Association (LAA) about the wide variety of activities being undertaken by the organisation and how it is ensuring the live sales rings continue to represent the UK red-meat sector.

Duncan Wyatt, AHDB's Lead Commodity Markets Analyst provides a fascinating insight into UK and overseas red meat markets and discusses the impact of Free Trade Agreements and future farm support. Whilst John Mercer, Director of NFU Cymru outlines the "Vision for Welsh Upland Farming" report and discusses the importance of balancing productive farming and the environment.

Brian Richardson, Head of Agriculture Virgin Money highlights how the recent changes following Brexit will mean that utilising the latest technologies and focusing on data will help to improve productivity and output. We also hear from Bridget Lloyd, RamCompare project co-ordinator, a joint-levy funded project that is using performance recording to assess genetic potential. Hannah Jackson, better known as the Red Shepherdess also gives us an insight into her plans for the year ahead with her growing flock.

And finally, we know the last twelve months have been a challenge for everyone both physically and mentally. So, we just wanted to remind everyone that confidential help and support is available from a range of fantastic farming charities.

From the team at Shearwell, we hope you enjoy the read!

Best wishes,

Julie  
Editor



# PRODUCT FOCUS

## Turbo Tagger

The future of high welfare high throughput tagging



*"The Turbo Tagger makes tagging a one person job. One of the best things that has happened to tagging"*



A revolutionary way to tag your sheep, designed for the market leading SET Tag



**Shearwell Data**

**Livestock Systems**



## SHEARWELL DATA LIMITED – PROUD SPONSOR OF THE FARMERS WEEKLY “SHEEP FARMER OF THE YEAR 2020”

Congratulations to the winners - Neil and Debbie McGowan of Incheoch Farm, Blairgowrie, Perthshire. The McGowan's farm is a mix of grass, arable and rough grazing which carries 1,300 breeding ewes and 220 recorded Simmental and Luining cattle.

The McGowan's are focused on producing "functional, efficient and robust" breeding stock and have utilised data, type, rigorous maternal evaluation and commercial understanding to grow their "Working Genes" on-farm breeding sale. Income from their on-farm Working Genes ram sale has almost doubled by increasing averages by £250 and selling more rams.

Neil and Debbie's farm produces Texel and Lleyn breeding stock, with a focus on maternal traits and longevity. The Lleyn and Texel stud flocks are Signet recorded and have grown as the genetic merit has developed.

What the Judges said:

"The McGowans understand how breeding decisions and systems interact, which they use to good advantage to grow demand for their genetics. The business has made bold moves and remains focused on new opportunities."

What the Judges liked:

- Commercial, forage-based system
- Repositioned their breeding goals to meet market demands
- Rigorous maternal assessment at lambing time
- Ingenuity shown in marketing livestock and farm produce
- Focused on the future and adaptable mindset

Scan this QR code to view the Farmers Weekly video:



# NEW PRODUCTS

Having quick, reliable data at your farming fingertips is key for any business. The ShearWeigh has been designed by people who understand the rigours of farm life and extreme weather conditions. Extensive farm trials have demonstrated:

- Robust design
- Easy to set up
- Accurate
- Quick read
- Simplicity of function
- Clear readout
- Light weight
- Long life battery
- Reliable
- Excellent value for money

## ShearWeigh Weigh Head



A world first - Revolutionary new Metal Cattle EID tag

Shearwell is the first company in the world to offer an official metal EID tag for cattle. The development of this revolutionary product has been an ambition of the business for a number of years and is testament to the expertise within the Shearwell business.

The Metal Cattle EID Tag has been designed around the very popular Ketchum tag, which is well-liked by livestock farmers because of its retention capabilities and a number of other features:

- Designed for excellent retention capabilities
- Incorporates RFID capabilities (ISO 11784/11785 compliant RFID tag)
- Manufactured from stainless steel
- Tag number applied using permanent laser mark process
- Tamper resistant
- Tamper evident

## REVOLUTIONARY

## Metal Cattle EID Tag

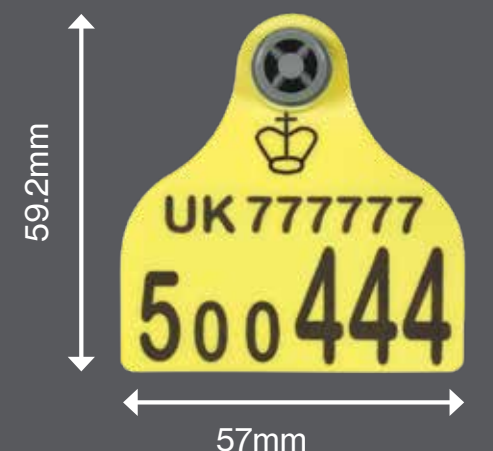


Shearwell Data has recently made an addition to the family of Combi 3000 tags by adding a "Medium" sized tag to the existing large, small and button range. The Combi 3000 Medium has been specifically designed for smaller breeds or for farmers who prefer working with smaller sized primary tags:

- Can be used as a Primary or Secondary tag
- Ideally suited for smaller breeds or those that prefer a smaller sized primary tag
- Can be used in combination with another medium, a small flag or a button tag as a secondary
- Combines the use of new materials and refined manufacturing process for improved quality and retention
- View our video on YouTube to ensure the correct applicator pin is used to apply Combi 3000 tags



## Medium Tag





## NEW - SHEARWEIGH LOAD BARS AND APP



## SHEARWEIGH LOAD BARS

### Features - SW1000 and SW600

- Made from hot dipped galvanised steel
- Stainless steel IP67 weigh cells and stainless steel fixings.
- Stainless steel feet - designed for use in the harshest of environments
- Oil/chemical and UV resistant double insulated Shielded flexible cable



Cattle SW1000

- Heavy duty 4 tonne capacity

Pair SW1000

£1,200



Sheep SW600

- Heavy duty 2 tonne capacity

Pair SW600

£800

## NEW SHEARWEIGH APP

### Free ShearWeigh app features

- Easy-to-use navigation menu
- Scan EID tag or type in manually
- App connects to the ShearWeigh weigh head and Shearwell EID readers
- Screen shows clearly when weights are stabilised
- Configure the weigh head for cattle or sheep, kgs or lbs
- List of pre-set load bars saved on the app
- Option to create new load bar setting
- Built-in help
- Export the weight and tag data to another device



App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc. Android and Google are trademarks of Google Inc.

## NEW PRODUCTS - SHEARWEIGH WEIGH HEAD

"Simple and rugged - has been chucked about with no marks. The readout is clear whatever the conditions and stabilises weights very quickly and accurately. The simplicity of function and connectivity is perfect for cheaply achieving auto drafting when paired with our Stock Recorder."

Gordon Robinson,  
Norfolk



"Great bit of kit! Accurate and a very quick read. I weighed nearly 1,000 lambs with it, with no problems. The sound it makes when an accurate weight is made is an improvement over the light on my other make."

Jim Fletcher,  
Norfolk

### The ShearWeigh - Quick, accurate and rugged

ShearWeigh SDL910

£495

Having quick, reliable data at your farming fingertips is key for any livestock business. Shearwell Data Ltd has developed the exciting new ShearWeigh weigh head and app to help you meet your business goals.

The versatile system was designed by people who understand the day-to-day requirements of busy livestock farmers. So whether you simply want to weigh your livestock or measure your animals' daily liveweight gains (DLWG) to ensure you are on target with your stock's performance, compare the weight and growth of stock against feed costs, know your best and worst performing animals or simply ensure health treatments are correctly applied according to the animal's weight, then the ShearWeigh weigh head and app are the tools for you.

The new Shearwell ShearWeigh weigh head is made here in the UK and built for years of reliable service in the harshest of farm environments. Designed by the Shearwell technical team, with input from the farm team, the ShearWeigh ensures that busy livestock farmers can set up easily and quickly. With a 12 hour battery life, the ShearWeigh can go pretty much anywhere, without any reliance on mains electric or a generator.

The rugged ShearWeigh weigh head is mounted on a fully adjustable bracket, so the readout weights are clearly visible from any angle. Weighing an animal is fast and accurate. The ShearWeigh will beep to confirm a weight was read so the animal can be drafted or released.

The ShearWeigh has been trialled on a range of farms and always demonstrated accuracy, speed of read, reliability and excellent value for money.

The competitively priced ShearWeigh weigh head comprises an extensive range of features and specifications including:

- Robust design, capable of withstanding the rigours of a working farm and extreme weather conditions.
- Suitable for weighing cattle or sheep
- Simple interface - easy to set up and use.
- Only two buttons to consider - Power and Zero.
- All settings configured simply by the ShearWeigh mobile app.
- Fast and accurate reading.
- Easy to read display screen (bright screen) - ideal when working in failing light or dark buildings.
- Light weight.
- Ergonomic design.
- Supplied with bracket - easily adjusted to tilt (+15° to -15°) and rotate (180°).

#### Technical specifications:

- Long battery life: 12 hours
- Size: W x H x D 211.1mm x 187.7mm x 64.1mm
- Weight: 0.9kg
- IP67 rated

#### Want to see more?

Scan the QR code to visit our YouTube channel where you can see the ShearWeigh in action or call the team on 01643 841611 for more information.





# LIVESTOCK MARKETS INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY



Throughout the unprecedented challenges created by Covid-19 in the last year and the restrictions placed upon the sector, livestock auction markets throughout England and Wales have remained resilient, and crucially, open. This has created a strong trade for all categories of stock, helping to stabilise the livestock sector throughout the lockdown period and beyond.

As we continue to adjust to a post-Brexit trade outlook, the livestock auction industry is providing a solid foundation for the future trajectory of the UK red-meat sector.

"The increased market throughputs witnessed in 2020 have been phenomenal, and this is in a large part due to the support, understanding and patience of our vendors and buyers, and in return the live sales ring is delivering strong market prices," explains Chris Dodds, Executive Secretary of the Livestock Auctioneers' Association (LAA).

"Compare this pandemic against the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 2001, when markets were closed, and stock prices completely collapsed. This time the trade has stayed strong, creating a confidence that would not have been there, had the marts closed," he adds.

The live markets have pulled in more small and medium sized retailers and butchers, by ensuring that the right stock is in place for them. In many respects, Covid-19 has set the footprint for the future, with marts seeing lots of returning buyers and vendors to the live sales ring.

"The farming fraternity can see they can get much more for their stock through the live sales ring, with the competition and fair prices reflecting the demand against availability," adds Mr Dodds, "The last six months have really shown the value of the auction system."

## Adopting Technology

Livestock markets have adopted many new approaches to maintain a safe and secure environment for buying and selling livestock, and the introduction of new technology will also likely be a feature that will continue to add to the future success of the auction mart system.

"Many markets are introducing real-time, online bidding platforms during their live sales, facilitating an opportunity to participate in the live sales, for those not able to physically be on site during the day," says Mr Dodds.

"Providing this opportunity for live, distance-bidding is a strong add-on to the core business of our members, providing a competitive and transparent environment to achieve a true and fair price for livestock."

## Training & Development

These developments align with more established, yet evolving, services the LAA supports. The four-year Livestock Market Operations and Management course, developed in conjunction with Harper Adams University, is now a well-established qualification and is a valuable resource for the next generation of young auctioneers as they develop their career.

In 2018, the LAA in co-operation with AHDB, also launched the 'Safe Hands' Master Drover Programme. Developed by independent training professionals Animal-I, this 'train the trainer' course gives a scientific insight into the best methods of handling livestock, and further enhances the industry's commitment to health and safety, animal welfare and traceability.

## The Next Generation

The LAA always has an eye to the future, and indeed has now appointed new Development Officer, Zanna Dennis, to help the Executive Secretary and board to further develop and extend the LAA's reach and services, and to help to drive policy. One remit will be to co-ordinate activities and liaison with the LAA Next Generation Group.

The LAA's Next Generation Group is a key component in this commitment to the future. Currently chaired by Russell Steer, a director of Kivells at Exeter Livestock Centre, the Next Generation Group was established to represent

*Images: Left - Shippon line up, Grimsburn*

younger auctioneers and fieldsmen, as well as to connect with the younger generation of livestock farmers.

Zanna's appointment not only further supports the LAA's role in policy negotiations and discussions with Ministers, Defra, Welsh Government and other industry trade organisations, but will also see her engaging closely with the Next Generation Group, and all LAA member firms, with initiatives in support of the wider UK red-meat sector.

## Heart of the Community

One of the enduring and key strengths of the livestock mart, is its place as a community centre. This was recognised in the 2019 Sean Rickard Report, "Livestock Markets: An Economic and Social Contribution much greater than the value of livestock traded", which revealed that livestock auction markets in England and Wales generate total expenditure of £3.42 billion a year, while bringing invaluable social benefits, helping to sustain and develop rural economies.

In 2020, a new study was conducted, commissioned by The Prince's Countryside Fund, and conducted by the Centre for Rural Policy Research at the University of Exeter, to evaluate the unique social contribution livestock auction marts play within the rural community.

The report is due for release in 2021, with the LAA looking forward to reviewing the findings of the independent study.

## The post-Brexit future

Going forward, the LAA will play a key role in bringing industry together. As the founding member and Chair of the Livestock Chain Advisory Group (formerly named the UK Livestock Brexit Group), the LAA, alongside other stakeholders within the group, continue to fight the industry's corner hard in areas such as welfare, quality standards and future trade deals.

Mr Dodds explains, "We will continue to have one of the most expensive production systems in the world, because we are governed more stringently than

*Images: Above right - Knags bull*

*Right - Shearwell Thame Summer Sheep Fair 2020*

many other nations and we have some of the highest welfare and production standards. The bottom line is, we need livestock on the ground to compete, and we need to focus on our provenance and quality standards without this being undermined by cheap alternatives that have been produced to lower standards and sourced from around the world."

While the LAA welcomed the announcement of the free trade deal between the EU and UK with some relief, it had already warned of the certainty of disruption to exports, regardless of any trade agreement, at least in the short-term.

Complications at Dover and other UK ports have subsequently been seen, with exporters experiencing extra layers of bureaucracy, paperwork and difficulties with certification. It is therefore crucial for industry to pull-together to maintain consistent supply not only in these problematic early months of the year, but as the position evolves through 2021. Despite the challenges, it has been heartening to see the continued high demand from within the UK and Europe.

The LAA will continue to play an integral role in supporting and representing the UK red-meat sector as it navigates these uncharted waters.

Mr Dodds concludes "The live sales ring has demonstrated, particularly through the challenges of Covid-19, that it provides the platform to meet the demand of the retailer and consumer, while achieving the true price for the vendor, and we will continue to invest in the future on behalf of the industry in a post-Brexit environment".



**Chris Dodds**

*Executive Secretary, Livestock Auctioneers Association (LAA)*



**Zanna Dennis**

*Development Officer, Livestock Auctioneers Association (LAA)*







# Forest Range Merinos



Forest Range Station is located in the Lindis Pass, Central Otago, New Zealand. The Emmerson family have been farming the station for over 100 years, with the current children being the fifth generation.

The Station comprises 18,500 hectares (45,714 acres) of native and improved pasture, tailored for raising Merino sheep for their ultra fine wool. Currently it runs 16,000 sheep, composed of 10,000 ewes (females), 5,500 hoggets (one year old ewe, wether and ram progeny) and 500 ram sires.

*Images Left - Top: Forest Range ram hoggets. Middle: Hogget fleece shearing. Bottom: July snow fall. Right - Top left: Summer country. Top right: elite ewes and lambs.*



## History of Forest Range Merinos

Merino sheep were first introduced into the Lindis Pass area 150 years ago. They were shipped from Australia and were descendants of the famous fine woolled 'Saxon' Merinos that originated in Spain.

When they arrived in the area the hills were clad with native pastures. Over the past 150 years the descendants of the first Merinos have adapted to the changed conditions.

They have learnt to live at 45 degrees south and to thrive in a climate that experiences extreme conditions - where the altitude ranges from 500m to 2,000m and temperatures can range from minus 20 degrees in winter, up to 38 degrees in summer. The sheep graze over an extensive area seeking out the best pasture.

## Forest Range Merinos today

To ensure that the animals have access to the best pasture to feed on, the property has been extensively fenced into paddocks (blocks) to help control the grazing pattern. Blocks range from 250 to 2,000 hectares in size. There are some smaller paddocks on the flat land for lambing the elite ewe flock.

Sheep are run together in the open country in flocks usually dependent on their age and sex. Sometimes a mob may comprise over 5,000 animals which means that they will need to be shifted onto better pasture frequently. Most shifting of the sheep is done using a helicopter.

## Developing a world class ultra fine merino fibre enterprise

The original breed of fine woolled Merinos that was imported into New Zealand continues to the present day. However, over 150 years there have been some major modifications to their type, sometimes influenced by the fashion trends of the day.

Forty years ago, modern genetic breeding technology became available and since that time the Emmerson family have used these tools to influence the fibre available from their Forest Range Merinos.

The animals that were selected for the breeding programme

had the ability to reduce fibre diameter (micron) of the wool and increase the fleece weight. Visual traits of both sheep and wool were accounted for as well.

As it was impossible to source Merino sires to suit the criteria, the Emmersons developed an open nucleus breeding programme. This meant selecting the superior animals from across the entire flock then breeding from the top 20% in an elite flock.

To enable the recording for the breeding programme sheep had to be tagged and together with a NZ manufacturer OCR (Optical Character Recognition), ear tags were developed that could be read by a hand held wand. This was essential to allow samples of wool taken from the mid side of the sheep (most representative) to be tested in a fleece testing laboratory. A carousel with a load cell weighing platform was developed for fleece weighing. To correlate the information an animal data recording programme was developed to suit the criteria that were being measured.

Massey University Geneticists in Palmerston North, NZ were employed to index the animals. To date over 300,000 animals have been recorded and the indices are based on sire information dating back to 1980. This has given tremendous selection capacity. Shearwell Data ear tags, together with a Stick Reader have been used for a number of years.

The Lindis fibre flock produce 50,000 kgs of wool annually. The fibre diameter is 13.2 micron average, with a range from 11 to 15 micron.

The resulting fibre is now the largest volume of ultra-fine naturally raised Merino wool in the world. Some of this fibre is scoured and carded into a sliver, ready for the next stage of spinning, It is then used for an exclusive range of products sourced by overseas manufacturers.

## Property sustainability and animal health

Farming operations are managed holistically to ensure that long term environmental goals such as water quality, biodiversity and soil fertility are maintained and enhanced. Animal welfare is of prime importance. The sheep have the ability to range freely with good quality feed, clean air and pure drinking water.

*Jeanette, Russell & David Emmerson*





Shearwell Data Australia is situated in Bendigo, the second largest regional and farming community in Victoria, Australia. Like our head office in the UK we specialise in the production and sale of the Shearwell SET tag (designed for sheep and goat use), along with a range of EID equipment.

## Sixty six million head of sheep

Australia is well known for prime lamb production and famous for its Merino wool. Traceability is at the core of our business, due to a strict adherence to biosecurity regulations and promotion of the Australian reputation for safe and healthy meat and fibre. We have seen a 7% decline in the national sheep flock in a recent MLA (Meat & Livestock Australia) report conducted in June 2019. However, we still have approximately 66 million head of sheep in Australia, with 17,700 farms across the country. All animals require individual property identification to fulfil Australia's traceability standards, with a growing number of progressive farms moving into data collection innovation by adopting electronic tag scanning methods.

## Young merino ewes are selling in excess of \$300

Shearwell Data Australia's latest ordering period has seen a significant number of tags pass through the system. This has been a substantial increase compared to previous years, with market share within Victoria alone increasing year on year. The company's peak season, which is mostly attributed to the concentration of lambing that occurs from the end of March through to mid-September, was carried out almost seamlessly because of the dedication of our hard-working Shearwell Data team.



The Shearwell Data team works together to ensure each and every customer receives excellent customer service and we pride ourselves on the strength and dedication to our company. We work together and get the job done!

Even through the unprecedented times experienced during the bulk of 2020, which saw many staff members disrupted from general work practice with the necessary adoption of remote office methods, customers were impressed to consistently find staff readily available to answer queries, discuss and explain products, place orders, produce and then ship tags with rapid turn-around times.

Australia is currently experiencing fair to good conditions that have seen many farming enterprises heading back into livestock, creating a demand for high quality breeding stock. Young merino ewes are selling in excess of \$300. The shift to warmer weather has also brought about a flurry of activity to farm life with harvest in full swing and livestock farmers slowly making plans for the lambs they look to expect throughout 2021.

**Brett Matthews**  
Business Manager,  
Shearwell Data Australia



Working to help the livestock farmer

EID Tags

EID Readers

Software

Handling



Shearwell  
Auto Drafter





## FREE REPLACEMENTS



**FREE Replacement SET Sheep Tags**  
- when you buy 200 or more breeding pairs  
(one EID and one Visual SET Tag)

## CUSTOMER SERVICE IS OUR PRIORITY

"I find Shearwell tags superior quality to any other and the retention rate is second to none"

N. Sandilands, Roxburghshire  
Farmers Weekly Sheep Farmer of the Year Finalist

"Now that's what I call service"

R. MacKenzie, Highlands

"I am so impressed with Shearwell Data, you are a fantastic company. Customer service and speed of despatch is great, I would recommend you to anyone!"

T. Wayne, Ceredigion

## VISUAL CATTLE TAG

**NEW Combi®**  
Medium  
(primary and secondary)

Designed for smaller breeds and farmers who prefer a smaller primary tag



## KETCHUM METAL

**Tamp2 - Steel** For cattle (secondary only)

Quantity	Runs
1 to 9	£3.30
10 to 24	£0.80
25 to 49	£0.55
50 to 100	£0.45
101 to 200	£0.35
201 to 500	£0.30
501 to 1000	£0.22
1001+	£0.20



**KL3 - Steel** For sheep, goats and pigs

Quantity	Runs
1 to 9	£2.20
10 to 100	£0.33
101 to 500	£0.27
501 to 1000	£0.22
1001+	£0.20



## PIG TAGS

**Combi Pig and Button**



## VISUAL TAGS

**FREE Replacements**  
Conditions apply - call for details

**Combi®**

Large (primary and secondary),  
Small Flag and Button (secondary)

Colours available for SECONDARY tags



## TST TAGS

Tissue Sampling Tag -  
single BVD or DNA  
tag without test  
**£1.95**

TST and Ketchum  
metal pair available  
- Call for pricing

**TST/BVD Flag or Button**  
DNA tags also available



**Price Tags Shown at Actual Size**  
Please call to order or ask for tag samples

Tags with management space available

Free applicator with first order - conditions apply

Please Order Urgent Replacements by 2 p.m.  
for Same Day Despatch

Replacement cattle tags - not originally  
supplied by Shearwell available from £2.50





# ELECTRONIC AND VISUAL TAGS

Excellent  
Retention  
Britain's Favourite  
Sheep Tag

## SET Tags

- One Design
- Two Functions



TAGS IN STRIPS

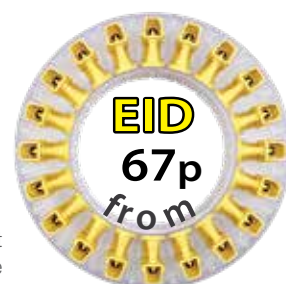
TAGS IN DRUMS



**Breeding Pairs** From 80p

**EID Slaughter** From 62p

**Turb**  
Tagger



Drums not  
actual size

SET Tags - tiered pricing applies to both breeding pairs and slaughter tags

SET Tag Colours Available (plus Grey for NEMSA Mules only)



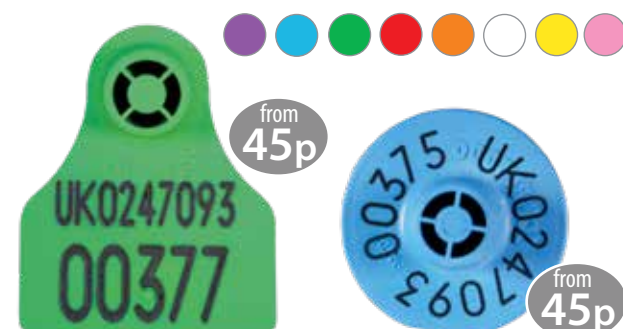
Supplied in strips of 10 SET Tags  
In Scotland and N. Ireland we can supply  
alternate EID and Visual SET Tags in the  
same coloured strip (due to current sheep  
tag legislation). For sheep and goats.

priced Tags Shown at Actual Size  
Please  
call to order  
or ask for tag  
samples

Supplied in 'drums' of 20 SET Tags  
20 SET Tags preloaded into the drum.  
Choose from 10 SET Tag breeding pairs  
(alternate EID and Visual) or 20 slaughter tags.

## VISUAL TAGS

Combi 2000® Mini and Button



## ELECTRONIC

EID E23® Button  
or EID E23® Mini



**NEW**

## REVOLUTIONARY METAL CATTLE EID TAG

Shearwell Metal Electronic Secondary Cattle Tag

priced Tags Shown at Actual Size  
Please  
call to order  
or ask for tag  
samples

- Made from Stainless Steel
- Permanently laser marked
- ISO 11784/11785 compliant RFID tag (134.2kHz)
- Designed for retention
- Tamper resistant / tamper evident

"It's as good as my  
usual metal tag  
for going in and  
staying in but now  
I can benefit from  
EID as well"



*A world first -  
revolutionary  
new Metal  
Cattle EID tag*



Supplied in strips  
of 20 tags

Strip shown -  
Numbers 26430 to 26449 (first digit is a check digit)

Prices correct March. 2021. All prices exclude VAT and delivery charges. Prices and offers are subject to change without notice.



## TECHNICAL TIP

### VIEWING ANIMAL DETAILS ON THE STOCK RECORDER

With lambing and calving in full swing for many people, it is important to know how to access key animal details, especially if you are in the middle of a task – this is simple on the Shearwell Stock Recorder:



- There is a large grey button on the left hand side of the Stock Recorder as you look at it – looks the same as the right hand button you press to scan a tag (circled in image above). If you scan a tag (on any screen) once the tag has populated in the tag field you can press this button to view various details about the animal.
- Open up whatever screen you require (weighing, lambing, calving, review data).
- Scan the tag.
- With the tag field still highlighted yellow, press the grey button on the left hand side.
- Options are Animal History, Add Comment, Add Cull Comment and Correct Details.
- Within Animal History you have six options to view:
  1. Details
  2. Weight
  3. Comments
  4. Progeny
  5. Treatment
  6. Movement – click on any option to view the information.
- Comments can be added here – simply type the comment into the box, select if you wish the comment to show next time the tag is read, and save.
- Some animal details can be corrected as long as there isn't a detail-connected event for that animal (e.g. you can't change a ewe to a ram if there's a lamb recorded to her). You can correct the date of birth, gender and breed here.

## FARMWORKS BY SDL

Software for PC -  
Communicates with our  
Stock Recorder and  
FW mobile app

Easy to use - for cattle and sheep



Ask for  
a demo  
pack

FarmWorks by SDL can help meet statutory requirements for record keeping and movement notifications. FarmWorks is the ideal livestock management program that helps turn livestock data into meaningful management information. Fully compatible with the Shearwell EID systems. Communicates with our Stock Recorder and app.

Complete (Cattle & Sheep)	£525
Cattle only	£375
Sheep only	£375

Includes one year's upgrades and technical support via telephone.

Data capture and transfer is the key to the future of the farming industry. FarmWorks by SDL can help meet statutory requirements for record keeping and movement notifications. FarmWorks is the ideal livestock management program that helps turn livestock data into meaningful management information. Fully compatible with the Shearwell EID systems. If you have any queries or would like a demo pack please contact us.

### FarmWorks App for Android

Use your Android device to go mobile with FarmWorks - add-on licence required.

Please Note: You must already have FarmWorks by SDL on your PC and have current annual support (call for details).

Add-on licence £30



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ENTER NOW

## SHEARWELL PRIZE DRAW

Sign up to our Email Newsletter and  
enter our Prize Draw for your chance to win

ENTER NOW

NEW ShearWeigh  
weigh head and  
a pair of load bars  
for cattle or sheep



RRP  
£1,695  
+VAT

IP67

WIN

WIN

Full terms and conditions apply. To view these and to enter our Prize Draw please visit [www.shearwell.co.uk/newsletter](http://www.shearwell.co.uk/newsletter)

KEY TERMS: Entry Period: Entry is open from 1p.m. GMT on 31/03/2021 to 11.59 p.m. GMT on 01/09/2021 ("Closing Date"). Draw Date: 03/09/2021 and the winner will be notified by the email provided at the time of entry. Prize: A ShearWeigh weigh head and a pair of load bars (choice of either SW1000 or SW600). Entry: Entry is free. Entrants must have internet access, be aged 18 or over and live in the UK, IOM or the Channel Islands. Entrants must sign up to the Shearwell Email Newsletter and select the opt-in check box to enter the Prize Draw and agree to the full terms and conditions. In order to complete the sign up process, entrants need to click on the confirmation email to confirm their subscription. Without clicking on the confirmation email, the entry is not valid.

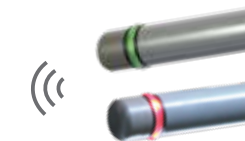


### Easy to use - for cattle and sheep

The Stick Reader is rugged, and built for a hard day's work out on the farm. It has easy, single-button operation and a large display. In a pen, in a race or out in the field, simply point, scan, record and store the data - up to 16,000 animals and up to 26 management groups. Data can be transferred from the Stick Reader by Bluetooth to a PC, a Mac, our Mobile Printer or to our apps.

Green light = new read

Red light = duplicate read



SDL440S Stick Reader £550

Tough Case £50



StockMove Express App  
- View and record livestock  
details on farm - Even without  
the Stick Reader or animal!

## EID STICK READER



Download on the  
App Store

GET IT ON  
Google Play

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App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc.  
Android and Google are trademarks of Google Inc.

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# SHEARWELL DATA - SUPPORTING FARMERS WITH QUALITY PRODUCTS

We provide a complete system to help you benefit from your data

EID Tags

EID Readers

Software

Handling



for cattle and sheep



## OFFICIAL UK SUPPLIER OF TE PARI EQUIPMENT

### Sheep Handler and Auto Drafter

Choice of models - Draft 3, 4 or 6 way

The HD4 handler has four auto drafting gates. Weighing, crutching, vaccinating or drenching, and drafting can now be done in the same session with the help of the new multifunction remote.

The lead up race has an auto sensing backing hook for improved flow, making it ideal for producers looking for extensive sorting.



POA



### Revolution Drench Gun

Choice of models - Automatic or manual and drench or vaccinate - full details online

Full details online

Automatic Drench Gun features:

- Battery Powered for ease of use and reduced hand strain
- Improved medication performance with exact weight based dose
- Eliminates costly over dosing
- Reduces product resistance caused by under dosing
- Fast refill and delivery with less spitting when dosing



Automatic versions £850

Manual versions £600

Optional 14ml barrel, inc. vaccinator £150

Optional 70ml barrel for dosing £125

## AUTOMATIC DRAFTING CRATE

Shearwell  
Data  
Livestock Systems

New design with anti-jump bars and removable caddy



Please Note:  
A Shearwell Stock Recorder is required for the management functions.

Drafting Crate without Stock Recorder

£9,999

Save time and effort when drafting your livestock and get it all right first time. Decide how you want to draft out your animals - weight, gender, breed, health problems, management group etc. - and then let the Shearwell Auto Drafter do it for you. Automatically. It's easy, fast and above all accurate. RFID tags and devices can be read in any orientation, use with our Race Reader and Stock Recorder for automatic hands-free data capture.

## SHEARWELL EID WEIGH CRATE

New design with anti-jump bars and removable caddy



Record weights, treatment information, comments and a host of key indicators to effectively manage your flock on the move.

RFID tags and devices can be read in any orientation, use with our Race Reader and Stock Recorder for automatic hands-free data capture.



Keep your ear tags, applicator and spray cans within easy reach. Both of the Shearwell crates come with a handy removable caddy.

Weigh crate without Stock Recorder

£5,700

Prices correct March 2021. All prices exclude VAT and delivery charges. Prices and offers are subject to change without notice.

Contact the team: 01643 841611 [www.shearwell.co.uk](http://www.shearwell.co.uk)




# DISTRIBUTORS OF SHEARWELL DATA TAGS IN N.I. & IRELAND



The business has expanded across three sites, two in Co Down and the third in Dundalk, Co Louth, Republic of Ireland - making it well placed to service the surrounding counties and further afield. The wider range of products can be viewed online at [www.josephwallsonline.com](http://www.josephwallsonline.com)

Joseph Walls Ltd is a family-run business based in Hilltown, Co Down, Northern Ireland. Established in 1974 Joseph Walls started out primarily with contract lime spreading and grass seed sales. Over the years it developed into a much bigger enterprise, with broader product lines to include fertiliser, animal feed and medicines, farm equipment and much more.

Joseph Walls Ltd began printing tags on Shearwell's behalf in early March 2020 and have had a busy and successful year to date. Tag orders and EID enquiries can be made directly with the Joseph Walls team on (NI) 02895 313263 or (Rol) 0429 424054.



**SEDGEMOOR  
AUCTION CENTRE**

The Livestock & Dairy  
Dispersal Centre of the  
South

Contact us for all  
marketing advice  
01278 410278

**GREENSLADE TAYLOR HUNT**  
[www.gth.net](http://www.gth.net)

Our Livestock News magazine is distributed throughout the UK. If you would like to advertise or appear in our next edition please email [newsletter@shearwell.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@shearwell.co.uk)



# MISSIVES FROM MINNESOTA



**Dan Persons**  
*Shearwell Sales and Support Representative*



## New investment in the sector

The outlook for the US sheep industry is pretty positive at this time. We have reduced our freezer inventories over previous years and have had one new slaughter facility come online in Colorado last fall. In addition, we have another new facility opening this month in Texas, subject to satisfactory inspections. These two new plants will take up the void left by the closing of the Mountain States Rosen facility in August of 2020 and offer excess packing capacity if needed. It is very encouraging to have new investments in this sector.

## Demand and price remain strong

The price of lamb has recovered to pre-covid levels over the last two months. We are on the edge of being able to reopen our food service industry that consumes approximately 40% of the lamb processed by the major packers. We currently have 140 pound (64kg) lambs trading at around \$1.60 per

pound at our regional auction market and lighter weight 80-90 pound slaughter lambs trading near \$2.70 per pound. The 80-90 pound (36-40kg) lambs continue to demand a premium in the market but they must be well muscled with some fat cover. The demand and price for cull ewes has been very strong trading in the \$0.80 to \$1.50 a pound for 170 pound (77kg) ewes. This will likely taper off when the larger runs of culls start coming in around early March.

## The Shearing Season

Here in the Midwest the shearing season began in mid-December. Most flocks are shearing their ewes 30-60 days prior to lambing. This keeps our barns dryer and warmer and helps get lambs off to a better start with little help from the shepherds. Our wool prices are definitely the sad part of our story. For the ewes we sheared in our operation December 30th we are being given an advance payment of \$0.05 per pound with the hopes we will get a grade and yield bonus of 10-15 cents in a few months. My wool is sold raw but would grade with 28-32 micron which is considered rather course. The western flocks with 17-20 micron fleeces are experiencing reduced prices as well.

## Large increase in feed costs

The end of 2020 saw a rather large increase in our feed cost as commodity prices rose. Our late gestation feed jumped from \$0.30 to \$0.35 per day feeding corn, corn silage and alfalfa haylage for a 170 pound shorn ewe outside at 15°F (-9°C).

## The fishermen are happy!

We are experiencing a very mild winter so far with low temperatures around 5°F (-9°C) and highs close to freezing. This is 15-20 degrees above normal for us. We also have very little snow with many fields showing black. Ice on the lake is 13 inches thick and the fishermen are happy.





# WHAT CHANGES MIGHT WE EXPECT?

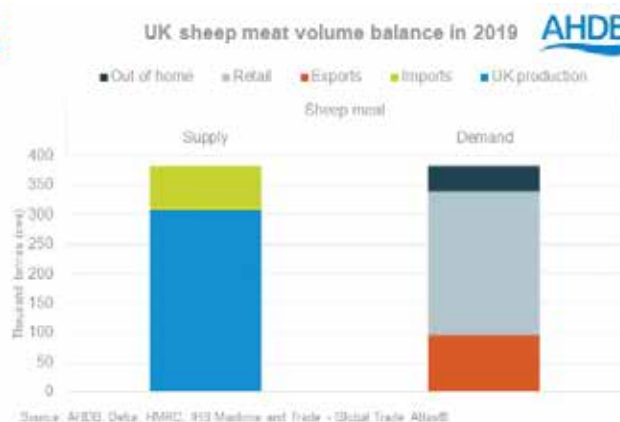
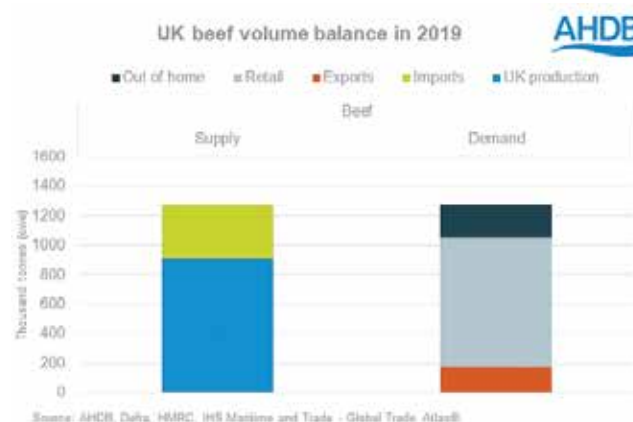
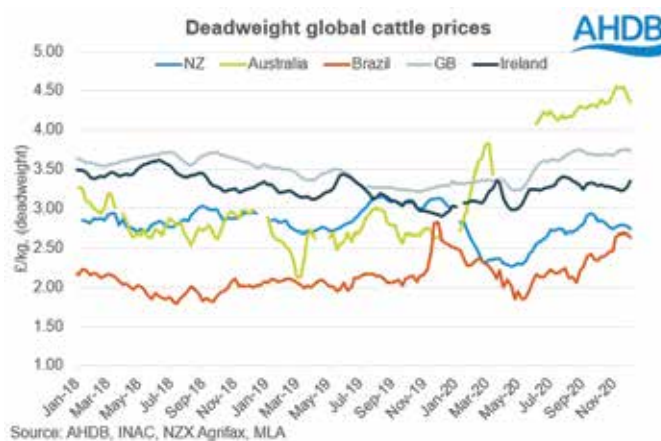


No-one needs reminding that the UK's relationship with the EU changed on 1 January 2021. But where do we stand in terms of our beef and lamb markets, and what changes might we now expect?

Short term impacts of the UK's exit from the EU - On 1 January the UK's position on transporting goods to and from the EU switched from 'deliverer' to 'importer or exporter'. Although nothing like the changes we could have expected in the event of no deal, in the short term we face delays at ports as additional border checks take place. Trade friction, or the costs associated with additional paperwork, customs checks, will affect trade both ways in the long term. These costs may be passed along the supply chain and could well have an impact on farm gate prices. Labour complications need to be considered by each farm business too, as it's likely there will be a smaller pool of people with the required skill set available and competition will increase.

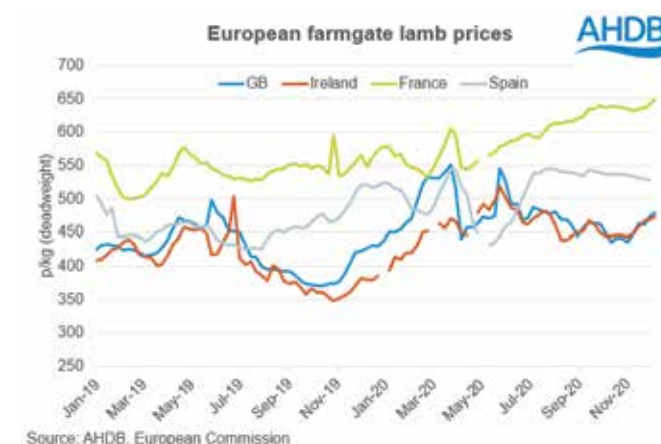
The UK is a net importer of beef, and increasingly is becoming a net exporter of sheep meat. These balances have implications for prices. The spectre of no-deal has gone, so prices for sheep will be influenced by the global market, which is tight at the moment. Supplies available for

conclusion of trade deals will have implications for UK agriculture. So, if new free trade agreements bring greater access to our markets, it will be the marginal cost of production of imports that will set prices here. While there may of course continue to be some cross-subsidy through environmental schemes, only producers that can compete on a short-term marginal cost basis will be best positioned. Long term, businesses need to recover their full cost of production to remain viable.



export are expected to be lower in both Australia and New Zealand, and Chinese demand for imported protein remains strong for now. However, China's pig herd is recovering from African Swine Fever and growing quickly. Drivers of UK beef prices are perhaps more domestic in nature; coronavirus is disrupting normal eating patterns so retail sales are playing a more important role, more retailers are sourcing British cattle which is supporting prices.

International competition - Leaving the EU allows the UK to strike its own trade agreements. We know that Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with USA, Australia and New Zealand are in the pipeline. All are big agricultural exporters and



Price, convenience and quality are the key three drivers for consumers and set their actual purchasing priorities (1) when in store. This is why the debate over farming standards is such an important one, as higher standards almost always come at a higher price. Now the UK has left the EU, and is free to sign its own free trade agreements, the differences between international production systems will come under more scrutiny. World Trade Organisation rules have much less to say about methods of production than they do about the final product itself, and some countries even argue against country of origin labelling.

Farm support is changing - It's not all about how consumers consume and will be guided by a philosophy of "public money for public goods". There will be more emphasis on natural capital. An agricultural transition period will be in place in England from the start of the year to help farmers plan for



the new arrangements that are on the way. The standout element of this is the seven-year phased reduction in direct payments (2). These payments offer a level of security and certainty to farm business income, amounting to 61% of profitability across the board, although it differs by sector. Although in the short term the overall level of support available could be the same, the amount of money distributed will also depend on environmental scheme design and uptake. Understanding on-farm costs of production and returns at the margin have never been more important (3). If livestock farms are going to be paid to produce environmental products, how much will this be in addition to, or at the expense of agricultural output? If environmental schemes cannot reconcile food production with environmental outcomes, farmers will need to become adept at maximising profits from their farms, even if this means some tough decisions on output.

What does this mean for UK lamb? Already the world's third biggest exporter of sheep meat, the UK is increasingly set to become a net exporter more often, because of falling domestic demand and New Zealand exporting more to China. New Zealand volumes will continue to play an important role balancing our market in the early part of the year with legs and loins, but the UK could become ever more dependent on demand for carcasses in the French and German markets. How do UK sheep prices compare with those in other countries (4). As the Chinese market develops, it's likely that exports from New Zealand will increasingly move in that direction. New Zealand could even end up playing the role of "swing supplier" in the next few years, which would increasingly tie price movements in Europe to those in China for some products. There is some evidence that this is already happening.

What does this mean for UK beef? The outbreak of coronavirus highlighted the importance of the value of the whole beef carcass when it comes to returning value to the supply chain. A survey of selected countries from AHDB Farm Economics' agri benchmark network (5) revealed that the UK had one of the highest ratios of sirloin steak prices to minced beef prices.

At the moment, around 45% of the carcass is minced, but mince could go from a low margin product to something more valuable, increasing this percentage. Lean meat yield from the carcass would become more important, and is something that can be managed through breeding and feeding. See how UK cattle prices compare with those in other countries (6). 2020 saw the implementation of measures by some milk processors to ban the euthanising of healthy bull calves on farm. This has implications for breeding and inseminations decisions, dairy production costs but also the beef supply chain. It is likely that we will see further contraction in the suckler herd, and more beef of improving quality coming from the dairy herd.

At the end of January, AHDB will be releasing its latest Agri Market Outlook (7), further examining the production, trade and demand prospects for each of its farming sectors. For more information on beef and lamb markets, as well as other sectors, please go to the markets and prices pages (8) on the AHDB website.



**Duncan Wyatt**

- Commodity Markets Analyst at AHDB

- 1) <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/consumer-insights-the-meat-shopper-journey>
- 2) <https://ahdb.org.uk/news/eu-exit-perspectives-direct-payments>
- 3) <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/horizon-preparing-for-change-the-characteristics-of-top-performing-farms>
- 4) <https://ahdb.org.uk/lamb/global-sheep-prices>
- 5) <https://ahdb.org.uk/news/carcass-balance-again-and-the-future-of-retail-prices>
- 6) <https://ahdb.org.uk/beef/global-cattle-prices>
- 7) <https://ahdb.org.uk/agri-market-outlook>
- 8) <https://ahdb.org.uk/markets-and-prices>



## TECHNICAL TIP

### HOW TO CONNECT A STICK READER TO A STOCK RECORDER

Details of our SDL Connect programme for connecting the stick to the PC are included in the box – you need Bluetooth on the PC to connect the stick.

Connect the stick to the PC and configure the stick to OUTPUT ISO DECIMAL.

Switch on the Stick Reader and Stock Recorder. On the Stock Recorder go into the Windows icon, then settings, then control panel, then double click on Bluetooth

Click on DEVICE and then SCAN – the Stick Reader will show as SDL 440-xxxx (where xxx is the stick's individual ID)

Click and hold over the SDL440-2600 and a circle of round dots will appear and then some options – select PAIR. No Passcode required, press NEXT  
Tick SERIAL PORT box

In the drop-down box entitled PORT click on the down arrow and select a BSP port (not 1). Remember which one you chose! Click NEXT and then DONE. Come out of those screens and back to FarmWorks.

Go into OPTIONS and RF Reader and select SDL 400S. Check the Bluetooth Port is in the right BSP number (that you chose) using BACK or NEXT to select, then click TEST CONNECTION – should flash green and say connection established.

To read use as normal – open the Stock Recorder to the required section, highlight the tag field and then read a tag with the Stick Reader and it should pop across.

Try it out with a spare tag using LIST on the Stock Recorder because LIST isn't part of your records, so a good way to check it has connected.

## RED SHEPHERDESS

2020 has been pretty exciting for me in terms of making some long-awaited progress and pushing the farm on. Earlier in the year we had an opportunity to rent another 35 acres of land just a couple of miles down the road, which meant I could finally grow the flock to a more substantial size. I won't lie, it's been a very frustrating wait over the last six years trying to find bits of land here and there, but as they say 'good things come to those who wait' and this year we've now jumped from 70 to 250 breeding ewes.

Science and data analysis have always been areas I have been interested in since completing my degree in Animal Behaviour. I've absolutely loved it when I've been contract shepherding on farms that have been recording and monitoring the performance of their flocks. It's something I have been really interested in implementing in our flock, however I haven't been able to justify the costs of equipment and technology ...until now.

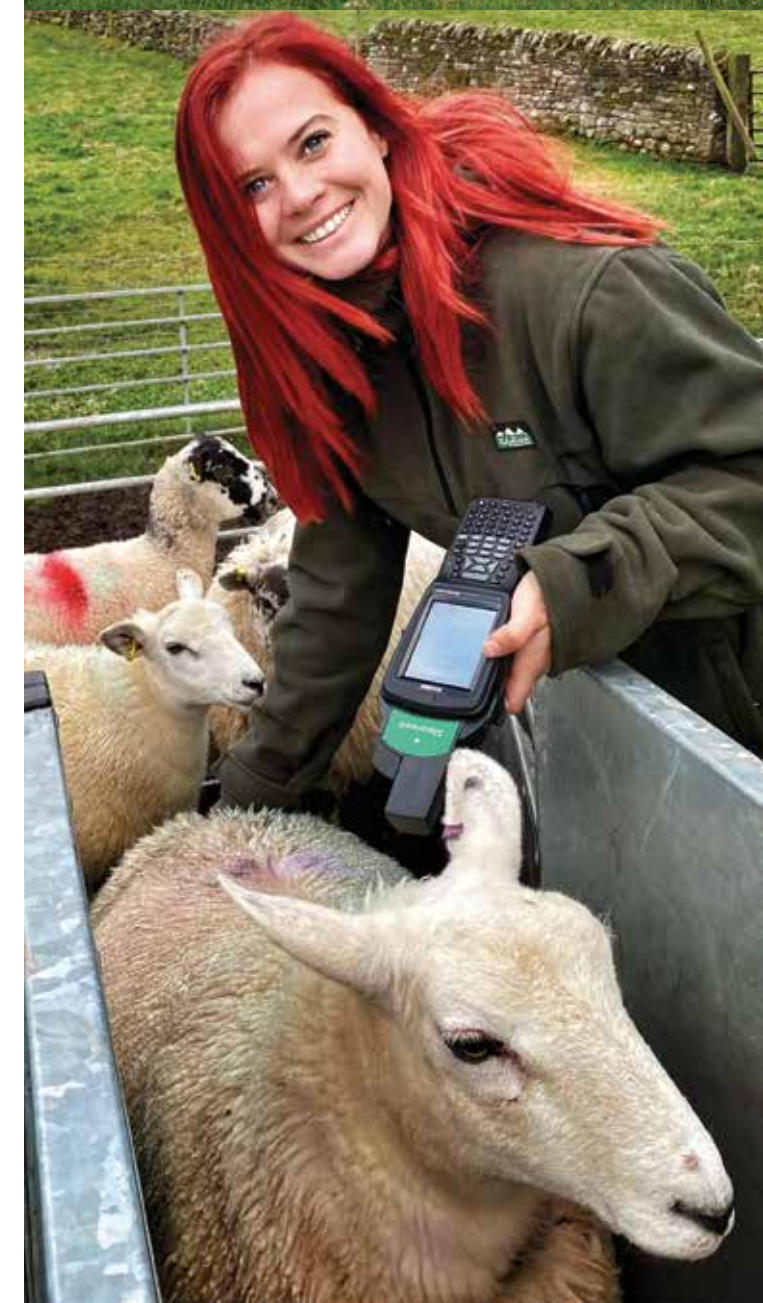
This year I have made two big changes to the flock. Firstly, I have introduced performance recorded tups from Innovis into the flock, the Abermax and the Primera (for our hoggs). We lamb outside and I finish my lambs on grass alone to go into my 'Red Shepherdess Lamb Boxes'. I wanted to make sure we were bringing in the right traits to the flock, for example; lambing ease, lambing vigour, growth rates etc. We will be comparing the Abermax to a commercial tup we picked traditionally by eye the same way we have every year to see whether focusing on figures or aesthetics makes a difference.

And to monitor these tups and their performance in the flock we have introduced a recording system for the first time and we are now using the Shearwell Stock Recorder. We are recording everything from scanning percentages, to lambing ease and growth rates of lambs through their period on the farm and more. I'm prepared that we won't see massive results straight away. However, I am committed to making sure our flock is productive and efficient long term and that we are keeping the right individuals for breeding that naturally thrive in our system.

I am impressed with the Shearwell Stock Recorder so far. It was good to set up and its already made recording groups so easy to manage. It has also made things such as movements and medicine records so much easier to record and monitor and I am really excited for the data to start coming in so we can start running comparisons and gaining more knowledge and information on our flock.

2021 should be an exciting year and hopefully a big jump in the right direction for this small flock and I'm very excited to see what a difference this change in management system can make.

*Hannah Jackson* Red Shepherdess



### South West Limousin Breeders' Sales Spring Sale on Friday 23rd April at Exeter Livestock Centre

May Show & Sale (Show if Covid restrictions allow)  
on Wednesday 26th May at Holsworthy Market

Further details from Kivells or email: southwestlimousin@gmail.com



Our Livestock News magazine is distributed throughout the UK. If you would like to advertise or appear in our next edition please email newsletter@shearwell.co.uk



# It's good to talk

Farmers are notoriously good at just “getting on with things”, often to the detriment of their own physical or mental well-being.

Farmers are often described as “stoic” and “resilient”, ignoring the pleas from family or friends to seek help or advice. Farming can be an isolated occupation, with many issues and worries to contend with including financial, health, business and relationship. But confidential help is in fact just a phone call or an email away.



## There is help available:

**Farming Help** is an alliance between the five national farming charities which include the Addington Fund, Farm Community Network (FCN), Forage Aid, RABI and RSABI. This alliance brings together the charities to see how they can better work together to secure the best possible outcomes for farming people. Farming Help has a central helpline number **03000 111 999** which is manned by FCN volunteers between 7am and 11pm every day of the year **www.farminghelp.co.uk**. There is a separate helpline in Scotland: call **0300 111 4166**.



The **Addington Fund** is about to celebrate its 20th anniversary. It was established in the dark days of the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001, to help and support farmers. It has five clearly defined areas of operation:

1. Disaster Relief on farm after disease outbreak or prolonged inclement weather.
2. Retirement Homes for farmers unable to retire due to finances or ill health.
3. Affordable Homes to help keep younger members of the rural population living close to their work in their chosen rural location.
4. Help qualifying farm workers both retired and still in employment purchase essential household items.
5. Help young first-generation entrants into farming using legacy farms.

For more information visit their website **www.addingtonfund.org.uk** or call Chief Executive Bill Young or Deputy Director Sue English on **01926 620135**.



**Farming Community Network (FCN)** is a voluntary organisation and charity that supports farmers and families within the farming community through difficult times.

FCN has over 400 volunteers, located throughout England and Wales. Our volunteers provide free, confidential, pastoral and practical support to anyone who seeks help, regardless of whether the issue is personal or business-related.

In addition to local groups of volunteers, FCN runs a confidential national Helpline **03000 111 999** and e-Helpline **help@fcn.org.uk** which is open every day of the year from **7am-11pm**. We have helped thousands of people deal with a variety of issues, including financial difficulties, animal disease, mental health and family disputes.

If you are going through a difficult time, or are worried about a family member, friend or neighbour, please get in touch. We're here to listen, support you and connect you with the most appropriate help.



RABI has been supporting farming people throughout England and Wales for many generations. Against the backdrop of growing uncertainty, RABI is evolving its services to address the often complex challenges that farmers sometimes face.

With an ambitious five-year strategy in place, this exciting period of transition will see the 160-year old charity focus on supporting a far broader farming audience. New services include a recently launched online weleing support and counselling platform which is free and anonymous to access - **rabi.org.uk/kooth**.

In 2021, RABI's Big Farming Survey will deliver even greater insight into the issues impacting farming people's physical health, mental weleing and the health of farm businesses. The data from this important research project will enable RABI and its partners to develop even more targeted support strategies in future.

RABI continues to provide confidential advice, practical support and care, as well as financial assistance to people from the farming community.

Every penny in every pound donated to RABI is spent on providing charitable support. This means all fundraising activity has a direct impact, providing support and services that are helping RABI to support their vision that 'no member of the farming community should face adversity alone.'

To find out more visit **www.rabi.org.uk** or call RABI's confidential helpline **0808 281 9490**.



**RSABI** supports people from Scottish agriculture emotionally, practically and financially in times of need. The service is available to those previously and currently involved in farming, crofting and occupations involved in agriculture in Scotland.

This is a comprehensive service to clients who are experiencing difficult times to enable them to move forward. Our helpline is open from **7am to 11pm 365 days of the year** on **0300 111 4166** and offers a call out service for the lonely and vulnerable.



Are you a UK farmer who needs help because your animals are suffering in the aftermath of extreme weather or an Act of God? Or do you want to offer help to these farmers through our charity? We help farmers whose feed or bedding supply has been disrupted by extreme weather or an Act of God by sourcing and distributing feed and bedding with the help of donations from the farming community.

The charity was set up by farmers themselves in 2013 to help farms in parts of the UK that had been hit by heavy snow and were struggling to feed their livestock. Since then Forage Aid has helped over 150 farms across the UK by sourcing and coordinating more than £850,000 worth of goods and services donated by fellow farmers, businesses and other charities.

Forage Aid supports UK farmers (with a Defra holding number) who face a clear and present risk of the livestock suffering due to extreme weather or an Act of God.

Call the Helpline: **07967 219991**  
Email the team: **info@forageaid.org.uk**



# THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’

The Bob Dylan song is now 56 years old, but is very appropriate for the changes we are going to see in the farming industry over the next few years. As we deal with Brexit, start to focus more closely on climate change and the net zero agenda, as well as utilising the latest technology and data handling, certainly “the times they are a-changin”.

We have now started to see the roll out of the new farm policy in England, the phasing out of BPS over seven years, and the introduction of Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS), along with various other grant schemes to support the transition.

While the phasing of these changes is welcome, the existing BPS payments account for around 60% of farm profitability in the UK, according to DEFRA, so this will be a considerable change for farming enterprises. This phased-in reduction of BPS will see these businesses receiving 50%, or less, of their payment by 2023/24. In farming terms, not very long indeed.

Some may feel it will be simple to replace the lost BPS income with ELMS, but that is too simplistic. The ELMS regime will be different and will not be for everyone. Also it will not be without cost in terms of reduced production. While it is good to see the money guaranteed up until 2024, it is likely that the ambitions of ELMS will mean a real focus on larger schemes. The distribution of monies will be different.

It is vital to start taking a close look at your own business now. You need to start asking yourself the following questions:

- How does my business perform?
- Where can we do better?
- What could we do more of?
- What should we do less of?

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) has



**Brian Richardson**  
*Head of Agriculture Virgin Money*

identified that UK farming has not moved ahead on productivity as much as in some other countries. This indicates there is potential to improve productivity and output going forward. New technology will play a part, as will big data and benchmarking. It is much better to be doing this now, rather than waiting until the money has run out when it will be too late.

**“Completing a climate audit for the farm is probably a must-have for 2021”**

Alongside the new regime set by the Government for agricultural policy is the challenge of climate change and the net zero 2040 ambition. Again, farmers need to understand what this means and start to be aware of the implications for their businesses. New policy will drive some of this, but it seems clear that food producers will want to know more about their suppliers - what their carbon footprint is, and how they plan to make reductions. Again, technology will help this. There are already some good examples of new agri-tech not only supporting the economics of farming,

but also helping the reduction of CO2 emissions. Although you can discuss the pros and cons of the various tools, and debate some of the science, the report will provide you with a starting point. It will highlight areas of your farm where there is potential for reducing emissions - which often can also follow through to cost savings.

So, a lot to think about, but we can now clearly see the direction of travel. It is appropriate to get on with reviewing your own business and how it can have a sustainable and profitable future. It will not be easy, but time invested now, will help to reap rewards in the future. In farming, as with the proverbial oil tanker, to change your course, you need to start planning well ahead of time.

At Virgin-owned Clydesdale & Yorkshire Bank, we very much recognise the long-term nature of farming and will be working closely with our customers, helping them plan and supporting their businesses in the long term. Our Agricultural Managers across the UK have many years of experience and will be looking to use this to the full as we focus on a sustainable farming industry fit for the future.

# THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS!

As anyone who knows me will tell you, I am a keen advocate of knowing the numbers, so you can properly measure and manage herd performance accordingly.

I have been working with a particular family farm just outside Truro for around 15 years. In my opinion, it typifies a very well run suckler herd on what is an average size farm within Devon and Cornwall.

The farm is run by a father and son team. The farm extends to 200 acres and grows approximately 30 acres of barley. The stocking density on the farm is 1.45 livestock units per hectare. The cows are kept outside for nine months of the year and are only housed when it gets too wet, as it did in the winter! They are grazed on a kale, rape, stubble turnip mix with a run back onto bale silage in ring feeders. Each winter is becoming increasingly harder to keep the cows out as the winters are getting wetter and more extreme weather conditions!!

**“Good breeding and attention to detail will give the returns needed”**

The cows are a very well bred commercial herd of Limousin cows, there is fifty seven cows in the herd and six in-calf heifers. The bulls that run with the herd are acquired from High Herd Health status Pedigree Limousin breeders in Devon and Cornwall.

The feeding regime is a very simple, cost-effective system consisting of good quality big bale silage for the cows. The youngstock that are finished on farm are fed home-grown barley, with this good quality silage and a mineralised protein concentrate to balance the ration. The home mix concentrate ration costs £167.00 per tonne as a complete concentrate.

**“It’s possible to get cattle comfortably over 350kg dead weight by 18 months”**

The youngstock have performed exceptionally well as the figures below demonstrate:

Grade	% achieved by cattle
E3	20.00
U+3	52.50
U-	22.00
R	5.50

The steers averaged 388.5kg DW at 19 months of age, whilst the heifers averaged 355kg DW at 18-19 months of age. The steer overall average value was £1,478.00 at an average of £3.80p/kg

The heifer overall average value was £1,364.00 at an average of £3.84p/kg. There was only one 4H animal in the whole group.

These are exceptionally good figures when you look at weight for age with

these cattle. It shows that it is possible to get cattle comfortably over 350kg DW by eighteen months of age. Good breeding and attention to detail will give the returns that are needed to run a small suckler herd efficiently. The end price of beef is not the only factor that is driving profitability in this suckler herd -yes it helps of course it does!

**Striving to improve performance**

What does help is a really good understanding of the benefits of well bred stock, good quality bulls and how to manage and feed them efficiently. This farm demonstrates that it is possible and will always strive to improve on its performance.



**Lachlan Maclachlan**  
*Nutritionist FeedCo Ltd*





# EID ESSENTIAL TO RAMCOMPARE PROJECT



## What is performance recording - how does it help my lamb enterprise?

Many pedigree breeders use “performance recording” as part of their breeding programme. Through performance recording, estimated breeding values (EBVs) are generated for every animal in the flock to assess their genetic potential.

Both maternal and terminal sire breeds engage in performance recording:

- Maternal breeds focus on the performance of the ewes, selecting breeding traits to ensure a prolific and efficient ewe flock is maintained.
- Terminal Sire breeds focus on growth and carcase traits to improve lamb values.

Just as, when purchasing a vehicle you can refer to its engine capacity for performance, in the same way a ram's EBVs and breeding index provide an idea of his performance within a pedigree or commercial flock.

Bearing in mind 50% of a ram's genetics will influence progeny development and growth across a lamb season, using breeding values to help ram purchase decisions can be a very smart choice for the profitability of your lamb enterprise.



Reliable products and value for money: “We have used Shearwell set tags since EID was introduced, we cannot fault the tags or the first class service received from Shearwell, from tag orders to EID software support. We have very few tag losses from birth to sale - vital for accurate data collection on farm. Shearwell provide very competitive pricing and tag retention, so give us no reason to change our supplier.”

Rhys Edwards, Hendre Ifan Goch, Bridgend

Easy use and identification: “I started to use the Shearwell set tag as part of the RamCompare project, but they are better than the ones we were using before. Quite simply they are easy to use, easy to read and they do not fall out!”

Mark Exey, Hutts Farm, Ripon

## Importance of individual tags within RamCompare

Each year, RamCompare has selected performance recorded terminal sire rams, based on their estimated breeding values (EBVs) and placed around nine different rams on test at each of the project farms. New rams have been supplied each year with some used in subsequent years, providing important links between the years.

Lambs are tagged at birth and all data, including sire, dam, birth weight and siblings, is recorded. Lambs are weighed fortnightly, from eight-weeks through to slaughter, with their growth and development linked back to the performance of their individual sires.



Dedicated abattoirs, used within the project, provided all standard kill data with individual carcase numbers being associated back to the lambs original EID tag. From this slaughter data, RamCompare has created additional carcase trait EBVs to further predict a ram's genetic potential. Basically using information on the “engine capacity of a ram” to determine his ability to deliver more profitable progeny through an increased carcase value – weight, conformation or speed to finish.

Over five years we have selected 283 terminal sire rams and have created a vast dataset with over 26,000 commercially reared lambs, tagged and fully EID-recorded from birth to slaughter.

## What does this mean for the future of our sheep industry?

RamCompare has shown the commercial worth of selecting rams based on EBVs, with an aim to increase awareness in ram buyers and to develop their confidence to use EBVs to inform their selection decisions.

We have demonstrated a consistent £4 per lamb difference in progeny carcase value between rams on test. We need to help people understand EBVs so that they know which breeding traits to target in order to make a difference in overall profit from their lamb enterprise:

- Rams who excel in their Carcase Value traits have also rated highly with their Muscle Depth EBV, CT lean Weight EBV and CT muscularity, suggesting strong links between these traits
- The Fat Depth and CT Fat Weight EBVs are reliable predictors of fat class

- The Scan Weight EBV is a strong indicator of an improved on-farm growth with reduced days to slaughter (with a 14-day difference seen across sire progeny groups on all farms in terms of finishing time)
- The Scan Weight EBV has a strong relationship with lamb carcase weight, which can improve carcase value
- One key finding is that the best rams from all breeds are comparable, giving confidence that using EBVs to select superior genetics is more important than switching between breeds.

Fundamentally, to ensure clean and accurate data, one must have a reliable tagging system in place from birth. This empowers us to collect and use the data linked to individual animals on our farms and track performance. This enables sound identification of lambs who are thriving and provides important feedback to your lamb enterprise to determine the most profitable sires and your most efficient ewes, those who work well within your system. Equally, you identify the culprits who are under performing and therefore hindering your earning potential.

Many case studies have been written, introducing our farm partners, explaining their lamb enterprises and highlighting rams who have excelled within this project, these can be read at [www.signetdata.com](http://www.signetdata.com). Updated results will be released in May, in advance of this year's ram selling season. We continue to collect data from a number of farms this season, with thanks to Shearwell for their continued support to this project through the provision of tags.

For more information please visit [www.ramcompare.com](http://www.ramcompare.com) or contact [bridget.lloyd@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:bridget.lloyd@ahdb.org.uk)

**Bridget Lloyd** RamCompare Co-ordinator (AHDB)

RamCompare is reliant on electronic identification systems to ensure accurate data collection. Five years on, the technology has been shown to be accurate and reliable – with the benefits now extending far beyond the original project remit, as Bridget Lloyd explains.

The joint-levy funded project, established in 2015, sourced eleven commercial sheep farms to assist with data collection. All the farms were required to have established, fully automated electronic identification (EID) handling systems already in place and have a minimum of 320 ewes (same breed) available for the trial. Many routinely record 700-800 ewes each season. Shearwell, one of our projects industry partners, provided “breeding pair set tags” for all trial lambs involved to ensure full data capture of lambs from birth to slaughter.





## THREE KEY ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR FUTURE FARMING SUCCESS

Reflecting on the last twelve months, I'm sure you will not be sorry to see the back of 2020. Instead, we will look forward with renewed optimism that 2021 will see a return to normality, given that vaccines are now being rolled out.

From a farming perspective there have been and remain many challenges. However it's important that we concentrate on the opportunities that exist and be positive about our sector. We must never lose sight of the fact that we have some of the best farmers in the world, producing some of the best food and drink in the world.

The role and profile of farmers over the last year has been at an all-time high and Covid has illustrated more than ever the need for safe, quality and affordable domestic food production. The NFU campaign around trade and standards has also illustrated that we have fantastic public support for farming. To have achieved over a million signatures to our petition on standards, which ultimately helped deliver the trade and standards commission was a huge achievement for all those who worked so hard on the campaign.

The importance of food security will remain a key focus for us all in the coming year, as the four nations look to develop their own domestic agricultural policies for the future. Following the passing of the Agriculture Bill, England has already released details of its direction of travel through the ELMS scheme. Within Wales, Welsh Government has released a white paper outlining its latest thinking which is presently being consulted upon.

At NFU Cymru our belief has always been that any future policy should

be built around three key elements; productivity, the environment and stability. These three elements are interdependent and the ability of farmers to produce food in most efficient way whilst caring for the environment is reliant on having a degree of stability which enables farmers to invest and grow with confidence in the future.

### We must never underestimate the importance of farming to rural areas

Whether it be the hills of Ceredigion or Caernarfon and everything in between; farming is important. At NFU Cymru we often talk about how farming delivers not just economically through underpinning the food and drink sector, but also delivers environmentally, socially and culturally. Whilst we all accept that farming policy is changing, we must also recognise that any change should not diminish our ability to continue to contribute in these key areas. Instead the aspiration should be to enhance our offering.

We have in recent years looked to bring these contributions to life through various reports, events and videos. For example, a couple of years ago we brought the economic contribution to light with our Farm Business Days. We reviewed a family beef and sheep business and brought together all the business that the farmer wrote a cheque for over the course

of a year. That day saw over one hundred businesses attend, which shows how important farms are to the wider economy.

In recent years there has been a keen focus on the balance between productive farming and the environment. There are some who have sought to frame the two as conflicting aspirations but as farmers we know we can strike a harmonious balance. Farming and the environment go hand in hand with the two not being mutually exclusive.

At the end of last year, we launched our 'Vision for Welsh Upland Farming' document. It was interesting to note that 80% of those surveyed had carried out one or more environmental actions on the farm in the last ten years, while 83% said that future policy measures to tackle climate change were very important or fairly important. Furthermore 54% of farmers surveyed were in agri-environment schemes and together had delivered more than seventy different environmental actions on Welsh farms.

The findings of this research work provide 'another compelling argument' as to why future Welsh Agricultural Policy should include a stability measure to help ensure the safe supply of food and as an economic foundation in rural communities. This would be alongside the other multiple benefits provided by Welsh farming, amid changing trade and climate conditions.

As farmers and growers, we should never underestimate the unparalleled contribution that farming makes to all of society. Decisions that are made in the coming months and years will affect our businesses for years to come. So, it's important that we remain positive, but most importantly, we need to recognise our contribution and not shy away from promoting ourselves at every opportunity.

**John Mercer**

Director Cyfarwyddwr NFU Cymru



## DNA TESTING OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN



A little over thirty years ago a technique called Deoxyribonucleic acid fingerprinting, which was developed by a Geneticist called Alec Jeffries from the University of Leicester. It was used to identify and then convict a murderer. It was the first time the procedure, which we all know today as DNA fingerprinting was used beyond lab experiments. The procedure revolutionised police detection globally.

As with almost all scientific breakthroughs the initial costs were high and the time to get and interpret a result was slow. However, the fact that DNA had been used to solve one problem led others to think what other uses may exist for the technology beyond simply solving crimes.

Within the meat industry, Marks and Spencers (M&S) was the first to realise the potential of using the DNA fingerprint of every piece of beef sold to prove full traceability back to the animal on farm.

The M&S 'We trace it, so you trust it' initiative states "We trace all our beef back to the farm and animal it came from. And when we say everything, we mean everything – from the beef in your sandwich to the mince in your ready-prepared lasagne". And their means of doing this? DNA fingerprinting.

Of course, M&S and their supply chain is a massive business and to some their commitment to DNA traceability might be simply a means of differentiating themselves from their competitors.

Others may be of the view that it is too expensive and offers nothing to the retailer, the processor, or the farmer. But I, and the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS) beg to differ. And therefore, are currently running a proof of concept with a DNA tracing business, and a medium sized abattoir supplying

wholesalers, catering butchers and retail butchers' shops.

It is our belief that DNA fingerprinting will act as a deterrent to food fraud and the adulteration of finished beef products and other proteins with cheaper meats. It is also our view that this technology protects the primary producer from others making fraudulent claims of origin, claims of breed or claims of assurance / production standards.

After all, when a meat product is sold, it most likely carries the name of the retailer and it is their reputation which could be damaged, should an on-pack claim be found to be false.

The DNA tracing company whom we are working with has global experience of this type of work and reports benefits for producers in terms of increased returns on sales made into China, where consumers are willing to pay a little more for the reassurance of true origin. They also report within the pig meat sector in Ireland producers experienced an increase in liveweight prices as the market for Irish Pork became secure from cheap imports trying to be sold under the premise of false origin.

Many farmers will be working towards the NFU's Net Zero targets. We all of course know that Government is to pay 'subsidy or is it public money?' based on public good. And it is interesting to read in the official biography of New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, that she sees her country as producing 'low-emission food' and then stating that it is time to include positive environmental outcomes at the centre of making climate change benefits at the heart of trade relationships.

So, thinking this through and the application of DNA traceback

within the UK context, I for one can see supermarkets, probably led by M&S and Waitrose, ensuring that the farms from where their beef is sourced are hitting environmental standards. This will enable them to label products as being produced from 'climate friendly' farming initiatives.

DNA traceability has come down in cost. The time to process the data has reduced. The resulting 'big-data' it provides has further applications for processor and producer, as well as the possibility of being moved from its existing application on beef and pigs into sheep and possibly poultry.

For those in the supply chain who embrace DNA testing, they will enjoy the additional benefits of being able to talk objectively about their sustainability, their sourcing, and their supply chain integrity. The work which I and my team are involved with will, I believe, bring huge benefits to the widest possible market be it domestic or overseas.

And, as any retailer knows, trust creates loyalty and loyalty drives sales and market share.

**Norman Bagley**

Head of Policy at Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS)







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South of Scotland  
and North of England  
james.hickson@shearwell.co.uk  
Mobile 07714 744686



North Wales and West Midlands  
dani.hughes@shearwell.co.uk  
Mobile 07494 499096



South Wales (Mon - Wed)  
lisa.jones@shearwell.co.uk  
Mobile 07837 988977



Central, East and South East  
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