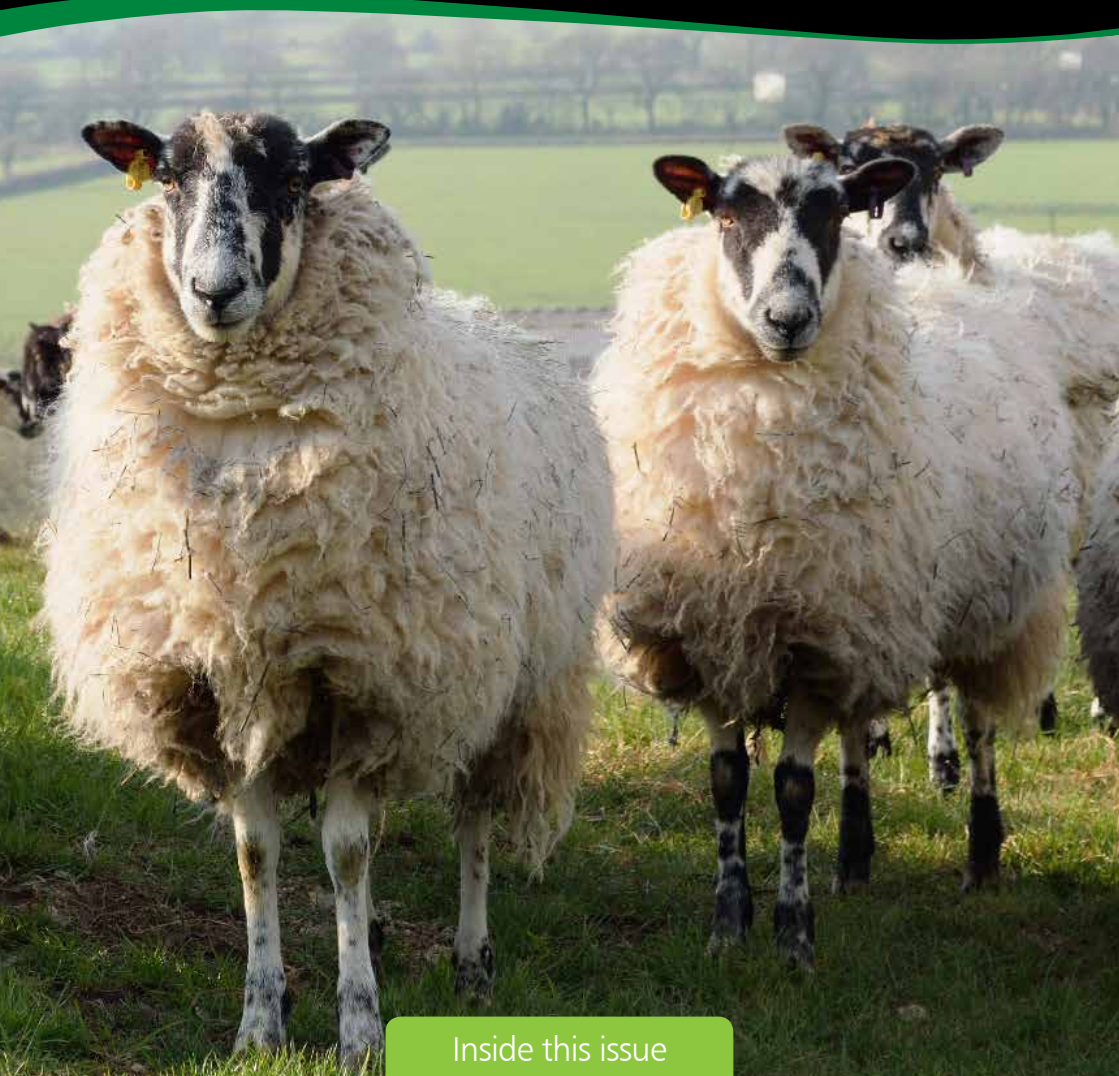




Inside this issue

Preparation is key for a successful lambing
Customer Case Study: TMR Feeding

Vet Focus: Lambing Environment
Win tickets to NSA Sheep 2022

Preparation and Attention to Detail at Lambing

by Beth Howells, Technical Development Co-Ordinator, NWF Agriculture

Preparation is key for success, something which is well known by sheep farmers; poor preparation leads to chaos. Ensuring that staff are trained and understand the system is just as important as making sure that the environment is clean with adequate supplies of the essentials.

Ewe condition and litter size are well-known details that are acted upon. Healthy ewes with good teeth, feet, and udders are more than capable of rearing twin lambs. It is ewes that have had prior issues lambing or previous udder problems which will need extra care; it is advised that ewes that have a history of problems should be recorded and culled.

Attention to ewes which are not the desired body condition score, carrying multiples or first time lambers is needed to minimise problems. Ewes which are overfit can have issues with the physical lambing itself, they may have large lambs which need assistance and tend to be more prone to prolapses. For those underfit, an eye is needed for the lambs - have they suckled? Does the ewe have enough milk? Can she support more than one lamb? First time lambers can be flightier; it is their first time in this environment, often the first time in the shed for a prolonged period and undergoing a stressful situation.

Lambing is a stressful period for all involved. For the lamb, this means going from a warmer environment to a potentially cold, wet, and muddy one. Ensuring they suckle essential colostrum quickly is critical for survival.

Lambs require 50ml/kg (of birth weight) of colostrum within the first 2-6 hours. Within 24 hours, lambs should receive 200ml per kg (of birthweight), as a guide an optimum birthweight for twins is 4-5kg per lamb (*AHDB Feeding the Ewe, 2017*).

Being born in dirty environments can increase the risk of diseases as the first thing the lamb will ingest is bacteria or pathogens from faeces or dirty bedding, which will reduce the absorption of the antibodies in the colostrum. Specific to indoor lambers, clean pens will also benefit the ewe, particularly when it comes to foot health. Although this starts before the lambing period; ensure those which are lame are managed accordingly to reduce the

severity. If pens are wet and damp, bacteria and pathogens will thrive, which will increase the incidence of poor foot health having a knock-on effect on performance: dry matter intakes, milk yields, and therefore lamb health. Ensure regular littering of pens is done to keep them dry, adding hydrated lime to both group and individual pens will also help.

Good nutrition pre-lambing with quality rations can increase the quality of colostrum and lamb vigour. Similarly, when looking for a colostrum or milk replacer, review the ingredient list. Often, the smaller the ingredient list the better. The ingredients listed must be digestible to the lambs and the colostrum replacer should have colostrum at the top of the ticket.

Although out of our control, the weather is a key factor in a successful lambing. If the weather is wet, windy, and cold, lambing success is often reduced. Attention to detail and careful preparation is needed for a successful lambing in challenging weather conditions.

Top Tips to consider:

- Outside ensure there is plenty of shelter to protect against the weather. If indoors, litter pens more regularly, wet weather will encourage damp bedding.
- Keep an eye on feed intakes, make sure both ewes and lambs are eating what is expected.
- Minimise rushing around, easier said than done but taking the time to inspect animals is key to picking up issues and therefore impact on lifetime performance and farm profitability.
- Boost grass growth at spring turnout with an early application of fertiliser, subject to ground conditions.



Vet Focus: Lambing Environment

FarmVets
SOUTHWEST

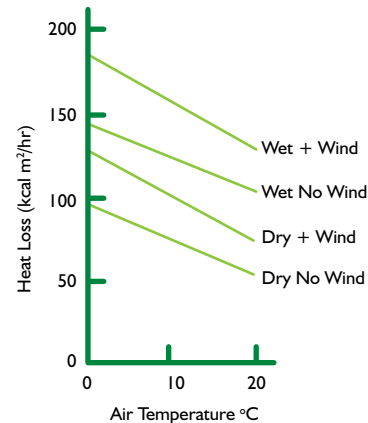


Figure 1

At FarmVets SouthWest we ascribe to the adage that “failure to prepare is preparing to fail” and it is the work you do now that will ensure a successful lambing. Planning can be put in place to minimise health issues by managing hygiene, maximising comfort and maximising immunity.

Whilst many of the determinants of health status at lambing are influenced by nutritional factors prior to lambing, there are other factors which can also be addressed to ensure minimal health issues are encountered. Regular studies carried out throughout the UK identify hypothermia, mismothering, infectious disease (eg. diarrhoea, watery mouth etc)

and hard lambings as the main reasons for neonatal death. We find this fits with the general picture we experience here at FarmVets SouthWest in a typical spring.

Making sure your lambing shed provides the ideal environment for newborn lambs is crucial in minimising these health issues. At FarmVets SouthWest we run regular farmer meetings which we find highly useful to farms in terms of optimising the lambing shed environment. Body temperature is a major contributor to illness and death in newborn lambs, therefore it is important to bear in mind that a lamb's lower critical temperature at birth is 27°C. Heat loss in lambs is a product of their surface area to bodyweight ratio, thus smaller lambs lose

heat at a much quicker rate than larger lambs with dampness and wind having a much more significant influence than temperature as shown in the graph to the left. The following will aid in minimising issues:

- Ensuring no draughts exist at lamb level.
- Ensuring adequate drainage from pens through a slope or channels to ensure that bedding stays dry minimising potential for bacterial growth and chilling of lambs.
- Pens to be kept dry and clean by using lime to disinfect pens in addition to fresh dry bedding between ewes.

In our experience, sheds with adequate drainage, minimal draughts and consistent use of lime subsequently have much lower incidences of navel ill, joint ill, diarrhoea, watery mouth and pneumonia.

Where outbreaks of infectious diseases occur collect samples early as this enables you to get on top of a situation before it becomes a major problem. Faeces samples, dead lambs, placentas are all invaluable sources of information which can be utilised to put a targeted treatment plan in place. FarmVets SouthWest are based in Somerset and East Devon offering a farm animal only veterinary service. www.thefarmvets.co.uk

Figure 1. The effect of wind, environmental temperature and wetness on heat loss in newborn lambs. [From Alexander, G. (1962), Australian Journal of Agricultural Research, 13, 82-99.]

Article from Cormac White of FarmVets SouthWest
01278 663399
www.thefarmvets.co.uk

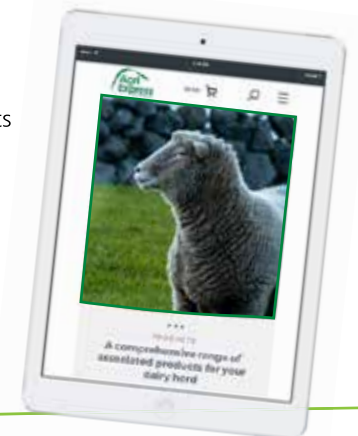
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Prioritising quality nutrition in early life will optimise lamb performance



By Georgina Thomas, Young Animal Feed Manager GB & Milkivit Regional Manager at Trouw Nutrition.

Industry standards suggest that annual lamb losses on lowland farms in the UK is estimated to be 15%. Losses in hill flocks are thought to be lower, however, the reduction in potential lamb output will detrimentally impact business profitability in any system.

Most lamb losses occur during pregnancy or in the first few weeks of life, with 49% of losses occurring in the first 48 hours after lambing (Figure 1).

Much of this loss is preventable and primarily occurs due to a lack of sufficient quantities of adequate quality colostrum in the first 24 hours post lambing.

The first few hours after birth are critical for the survival of the newborn lamb. Ensuring an adequate supply of good quality colostrum is key in supporting lamb health, performance, and survivability. Colostrum is a nutrient-dense

feed that contains a higher fat, protein, and mineral content than ewe's milk. Not only does colostrum provide essential nutrients to the newborn lamb, but it also stimulates digestive activity and contains immunoglobulins that function as antibodies to support the immune system.

Following colostrum feeding, the choice of a lamb milk replacer for artificially reared lambs must be carefully considered.

Newborn lambs have limited energy reserves so early provision of adequate energy in a highly digestible form is therefore essential to support early life survivability, body temperature maintenance, immune system support, daily live weight gains and optimal development for flock replacements.

Adverse weather conditions during the lambing period can further exacerbate body heat loss increasing these requirements even further.

Protein quality and digestibility is also a key consideration. Selecting a lamb milk replacer containing 100% of protein from dairy sources maximises digestibility and availability of nutrients which in turn supports lamb performance, particularly for that young lamb. Osmolality measures the concentration of solute particles in a solution and is calculated by adding the concentrations of sugars and minerals in mOsm/kg of solvent. Lamb milk replacers with elevated levels of osmolality can damage gut integrity, increase the risk of abomasal bloat and potentially exacerbate diarrhoea severity in sick lambs. Choosing a product that has been carefully formulated with osmolality in mind will help to reduce the risk of diarrhoea.

A recommended lamb milk replacer, available from NWF Agriculture, is Milkivit Energized Lamb Milk. Available as a 50% skim or whey product.

The formulation has been carefully designed to help lambs achieve their full growth potential and has been specifically developed with four key benefits in mind:

- Improved energy density
- Optimal protein digestibility
- Controlled osmolality
- Careful mineral & vitamin supplementation

Follow NWF Agriculture on Facebook and Twitter to see how you can win 2 X FREE bags of Milkivit ELM plus some Milkivit goodies.

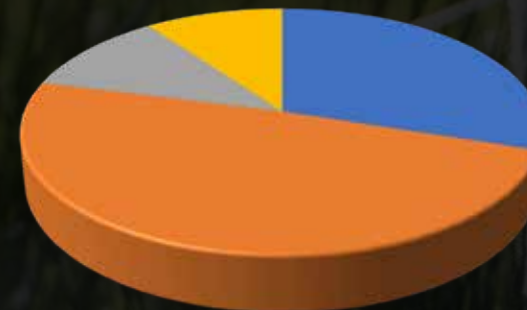


Figure 1: Lamb losses

15 days post lambing, 10%
Between scanning and lambing, 30%
At lambing (0-48hrs), 49%
2-14 days post lambing, 11%

Article Sources: Mellor & Murray, 1985; Kenyon et al., 2005.



Focus on pre lambing nutrition to finishing lambs quickly

Farming a large flock of sheep in Cwmlanerch, North Wales, the Hughes family very much focus on pre-lambing nutrition to ensure their ewes and lambs get the best start.

For the ewes, it is making sure they are fit enough and can support their offspring in the spring, as well as maintaining condition throughout the year. For the lambs, it is ensuring they are born with high vigour and with thrift to ensure they are up quickly and sucking. Continued assessment of the flock and pasture is key to maintaining a profitable and successful business. In addition to this continued assessment, trial and error is a key strategy helping the family to put informed decisions into action.

Phil Hughes works in partnership with his father, son and wife. The family have farmed the mixture of mountain, marginal and lowland land for four generations. The

flock predominantly consists of lowland and welsh mountain ewes, and ewe lamb replacements to fit the landscape. Their key aim is to have a third of their lambs sent to slaughter before June, therefore giving these lambs the best start in life in critical to this success.

The farm use a TMR system and have done for about 15 years. "We have tried all sorts with last year trying some liquid feed" says Phil. For the in-lamb ewes, a high protein (around 20%), good quality blend containing a range of protein sources is fed. A key element of the blend is the inclusion of NWF's Ultra Soy, helping to provide the bypass protein element. In conjunction with John Vipond's work, ewe condition was as desired, giving them enough reserves to support lamb performance once turned out.

Once lambed, they are kept inside for a maximum of 3 days, and then put onto

fresh pasture. The pasture has been rested for several months, and ewes and lambs are stocked according to grass growth accompanied by high mag buckets.

Lambs destined for the abattoir have access to NWF's Fast Lamb creep from about a week old until they are sold direct to Dunbia. "We weigh the lambs before they leave and, on the whole, we are happy with the weights" adds Phil. On the other end of the spectrum, replacement ewe lambs never see concentrates until the following lambing season.

For the coming season the Hughes' are going to continue with trial and error; they have previously noted the variety of silage dry matter and moisture can impact TMR intakes "We are going to trial feeding some compound. We believe that it is important that we know for sure what our ewes are eating, and as compounds tend to be more consistent, we can easily assess their concentrate intakes", concludes Phil.



NWF Agriculture would like to thank the team at Cwmlanerch for their insight to their family and farming business and we wish the very best for the coming season.

The NWF range of feed and mineral buckets are a popular and convenient way of providing bio-available minerals, trace elements and vitamins to livestock 24 hours a day.

Specially formulated to complement a wide range of on farm feeding systems the buckets are an ideal way of supplementing livestock whilst reducing labour demands. Produced using only the highest quality raw materials, the buckets are palatable and offer superior health and performance benefits to livestock.

All products are weatherproof with no waste, allowing livestock to eat every last drop.

High Mag

Reduce the risk of staggers (Hypomagnesemia) in lactating sheep.



- High magnesium mineral lick containing 3 sources of magnesium to offer protection against staggers during spring and autumn months.
- A combination of quickly available and slow releasing magnesium sources to protect livestock 24 hours a day
- Vitamin D3 to aid in the absorption of calcium, helping to prevent milk fever
- A balanced range of trace elements and vitamins to address the deficiencies often seen in spring and autumn grass

Available in 20kg and 80kg tubs

Typical intakes sheep 30g head/day

**Suitable for mixed grazing*

Ewe Breeder

For productive ewes from tupping to lambing.



- High quality protein and energy feed supplement ideal for ewes, rams and lambs at grass
- Boost ewe body condition and ovulation rates in the pre-tupping period to maximise fertility
- Vitamins, minerals and trace elements included to support the pregnant ewe and growing lamb
- Added fish oil as a source of omega 3, supporting egg development and lamb viability
- High levels of protected Zinc to support the immune system and hoof health
- Contains MOS, to activate the animals immune system and improve colostrum quality to breeding livestock

Available in 20kg and 80kg tubs

Typical intakes sheep 30g head/day

Opportunities in ewe feeding

With more sheep farmers actively focusing on making quality silage, there is a growing opportunity to include protected soya in sheep diets. Research and practical application of making the most from forage and by providing protected protein sources can have positive impacts on animal health and survivability.

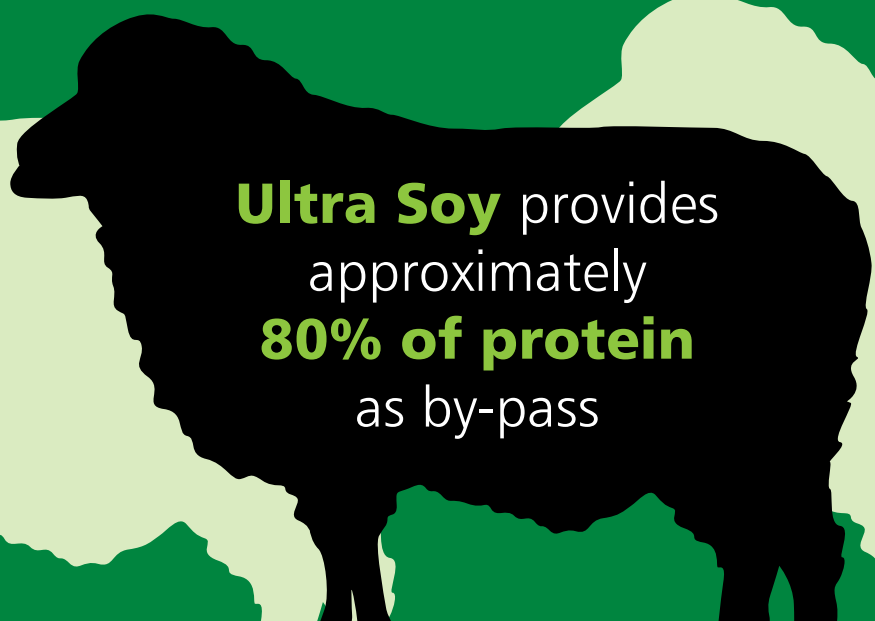
Anecdotal feedback and work done by John Vipond, and others, have shown that over the last month before lambing, ewes fed on an adlib mineralized silage with either 100g of soya (per lamb) or 50g of protected soya (Ultra-Soy) can reduce labour and feed costs. This was noted due to smaller amounts of supplementary feeding and making use of good quality silage to provide ewes with their required energy. A target of 1 bale per 4 ewes of ME 11+ or more is needed. Blood testing on a sample of ewes can be done if there is any doubt in silage quality.

Feeding the right nutrition not only makes a big difference to ewes but will make a significant impact on lamb survivability through ewe colostrum quality. Correct nutrition also reduces the risk of watery mouth and twin lamb disease.

Looking ahead there is a lot of uncertainty across the sector, not to mention the volatility the industry is experiencing with raw material prices; all reasons enough to assess the farm opportunities and resources. Working with suppliers, vets and your NWF ruminant specialist can aid in creating and maintaining a resilient and productive enterprise.

Although this will not impact this season, now (post lambing) is the time to start thinking about the coming silage season, discuss with NWF what you can do to improve your forage for the 2021/2022 lambing season.

Source: John Vipond, 2016; Farming Connect, 2019.



Ultra Soy provides
approximately
80% of protein
as by-pass

Feeding Your Flock This Spring

All NWF Agriculture ewe and lamb feeds are formulated to combine the correct levels of energy and protein with appropriate levels of minerals and vitamins to optimise your flocks health and performance.

NWF Ewe Feeds

Ewe Boost Nuts or Rolls	Champion Nuts	Classic Nuts	Premium Nuts
- The highest quality ewe compound, formulated to meet ewe requirements and promote colostrum quality. - Using high quality ingredients this diet provides a balanced source of rumen energy and protein promoting rumen stability and health. 19% protein, high glucogenic levels.	- A high energy density feed specifically formulated to meet ewe requirements and promote colostrum quality. - Raw materials including protected fat and high-quality by-pass protein are carefully selected to ensure optimal quality. 19% protein, high glucogenic levels. (20% protein from Wixland).	- A tried and tested high energy feed. - Balanced energy and protein sources ensure a steady, even flow of nutrients to the ewe throughout a 24-hour feeding cycle. 18% protein.	- A cost effective, ewe diet. - Balanced in energy and protein. 18% Protein. - Cost effective designed to promote milk yield.
<i>*Only available at Wardle</i>	<i>*Available from all sites</i>	<i>*Only available at Wardle and Wixland</i>	<i>*Available from all sites</i>

Ewetrition Rolls	Prime Rolls	Winter Ewe Nuts or Rolls
- A high energy density feed specifically formulated to meet ewe requirements and promote colostrum quality. - Formulated with high quality ingredients providing a balanced source of rumen energy and protein promoting rumen stability and health. 19% protein, high glucogenic levels.	- A good quality ewe diet. - Balanced in energy and protein. 18% protein. - Cost effective designed to promote milk yield.	- A cost effective ewe diet to promote milk yield. - Balanced in energy and protein. 18% protein.
<i>*Available from all sites</i>	<i>*Available from all sites</i>	<i>*Only available at Wardle and Longtown.</i>

NWF Lamb Feeds

Fast Lamb	Super Lamb	Prime Lamb	Lamb Pro
- A high quality, energy dense starter diet. - Contains a balance of energy and protein sources to boost live weight gain. - Enables early marketing of lambs. - Available in a 4mm pellet, 17% protein.	- Promotes a good, fast finish on store lambs allowing flexibility in marketing. - Can be fed ad lib with straw or restricted in conjunction with forage. - Available in 6mm nut, 15% protein.	- A palatable cost-effective lamb diet, suitable for finishing. - Suitable for housed or grazing lambs. 14% protein, available in 6mm nut.	- A balanced cost-effective lamb diet. 16% protein, available in a 6mm nut.
<i>*Available from all sites</i>	<i>*Available from all sites</i>	<i>*Only available from Wardle</i>	<i>*Only available from Wardle</i>

Blends & Molasses

In addition to compound feed we can formulate specific blends for your flock making use of a wide variety of top quality raw materials, sourced from around the world which are then accurately blended together in our fully UFAS approved facilities. Blends offer the flexibility of straights yet have the requirement of only one storage bin. NWF's bespoke formulations mean our feed specialists can provide a tailor made feed plan using the NutriOpt Feed Rationing System, unique to each flock and system. NWF blends can also be formulated to feature a range of feed supplements including high specification minerals, Yea-Sacc, protected fats, Ultra Soy etc.

NWF Agriculture also offer Sheepmol Plus Molasses, a high dry matter, high sugar blends of cane molasses, glycerine and liquid co-products formulated specifically to feed sheep. The unique mix of energy sources is ideal to promote healthy lamb growth and maintain ewe health. Sheepmol Plus has the added benefit of the vitamin and mineral package.

For flocks at grass that require supplementary minerals a range of mineral buckets are available as 20kg and 80kg tubs. The range includes High Mag, Ewe Breeder and General Purpose.

Brassicas for Lamb Growth

By Simon Matthews,
Barenbrug Regional Sales
Manager (South)

Feeding brassicas of any description has seen a massive resurgence in recent years. This can bring significant financial gains to any farm business if done correctly due to keeping livestock out of the sheds to reduce the housed period. Brassicas can help shift the spring grass surplus to the autumn when you require more grazing, whilst offering a consistently high ME feed with proteins ranging between 16 and 24%.

Ensure the field that you will be using for brassicas has no underlying drainage or fertility problems so you can maximise the benefits and ensure success. Ideally have a grass field that can be used as a run back so livestock have the opportunity to rest on a clean base. Lambs should really be bellied out before being introduced on to any brassicas to help with the cleanliness and any lame animals need to be pulled out from the group and taken off the system. Figures of between 50 and 70% dmi are generally used so a good source of roughage needs to be made available as well.

To maximise lamb growth, always ensure a clean water supply and an iodised rock salt is available to encourage salivation. If you are growing a "Root Crop" then additional protein may be required however if growing a "Leafy Crop", then more energy may be required to maximise growth rates. NWF feed specialists can provide advice and support on growing crops and rectify any short falls in protein or energy.

Trace elements will also need to be supplemented to avoid any potential issues as brassicas will not supply enough for the growing animal, In particular Iodine and Selenium, Copper may also be required but only after seeking the correct veterinary advice.

The 2021 NWF Grass Seed and Forage Guide provides information on the range of seeds available to maximise forage intakes. To receive a copy, call 0800 756 2787 or email nbteam@nwfagriculture.co.uk



National Sheep Association

The National Sheep Association (NSA) represents the views and interests of sheep producers throughout the UK. Funded by its membership the NSA activities are involved in every aspect of the sheep industry supporting both pedigree and non-pedigree, commercial flocks, and smallholders.

NSA was pleased and relieved that a last minute trade deal was agreed just before Christmas allowing vital continued trade with the EU. Focus of policy work now turns to ensuring initial disruptions to the UK sheep sector are minimised whilst new systems are introduced and adopted.

It is expected that several issues relating to the UK's departure from the EU will continue to cause some concern for the nation's livestock farmers, in particular those relating to the change in relationship between mainland Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI). The border between the UK and the EU is effectively now between GB and NI meaning additional controls for goods moving between our nations. Over time companies will get used to the procedures, and goods will flow. However, the added costs will end up either on the retailers' shelves or at the door of the producer.

Within the sheep industry there is one sector that will be hit hard by our new GB/ NI relationship and that is with breeding sheep – NI has adopted EU SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) controls meaning that sheep going to NI from GB will need to be Scrapie free as well as MV free (NI farmers regularly buy around 9,000 hill breeding sheep from Scotland and the North of England annually). Pedigree breeders in NI that would traditionally bring stock to Society sales on the mainland

will be unable to take the animals home if they don't sell (unless they can cater for a seven month period before they can return).

Trade, and market conditions, are fundamental to a successful sheep industry with the coming weeks seeing the continuation of the UK's trade negotiations with New Zealand and Australia, and with the US and Canada. The outcome of these discussions could put long lasting pressures on the UK's sheep farming sector and therefore, NSA will be contributing into these discussions in any way it can.

NSA believes the highly distinctive nature of the UK's sheep sector, with rich breed diversity and high welfare production methods, are something to be proud of and firmly believes this is an asset the industry should be promoting to a population that increasingly is asking for produce with good environmental, animal welfare and people credentials.

The NSA website features webinars, podcasts, events and NSA Membership. www.nationalsheep.org.uk



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150th Anniversary this year.**

150th 1871 - 2021
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NWF AGRICULTURE

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a leading national ruminant feed business.

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on 27th July in
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Closing Date 31.03.21



www.nwfagriculture.co.uk/nsa

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