

# RUMINANT NEWS

AT THE HEART OF THE BEEF & LAMB INDUSTRY

**Challenging  
assumptions on  
red meat and  
the environment**

**Beefing up  
our marketing**

**BEEF & LAMB:**  
at the forefront of  
food production

The past few months have tested the resilience of us all. But what it has shown is that our industry is very good at adapting when presented with a challenge

**Outwintering**

All the ins and out

**Sale online**

Signet has moved the sale  
of breeding stock online

**PLUS: your copy of the new RGCL Guide inside**



# Contents

- 2 Welcome from Will Jackson
- 3 Beef & lamb: at the forefront of food production
- 4 Challenging assumptions on red meat and the environment
- 6 New resources to kick-start your direct sales business
- 7 Weight watchers
- 8 Beefing up our marketing
- 10 Strategic Farms reap rewards from improved grassland management
- 12 Benefits of using faecal egg counts
- 14 Sale online
- 16 Chewing the cud
- 18 Outwintering – all the ins and outs
- 19 How big is too big?
- 20 Market intelligence in the spotlight
- 22 Upskill with us
- 23 AHDB opens doors for exports around the world
- 24 News and updates

# WELCOME

**Will Jackson, Sector Strategy Director,  
Beef & Lamb**



**Welcome to our new look magazine, which has been changed to reflect your feedback and include more of what you have asked for. There's more practical advice from farmers and our teams, a focus on our marketing and exports work and what it means for you, as well as an introduction to our plans for the environment.**

We were joined in March by three new board members. Anne-Marie Hamilton, James Taylor and Paul Unwin who bring a wealth of agricultural experience, as well as expertise from other industries and projects that will help us move forward on some of the industry challenges and priorities.

After consultation we've seen the amalgamation of the sheep and cattle health and welfare groups to create the new Ruminant Health and Welfare group, chaired by Nigel Miller. They are working towards hosting the first conference, which will be an online event in November.

We'll also be expanding our Strategic and Monitor Farm network this year, which you can find more about on page 10.

We're always trying to improve the contact we have with you, so please make sure we have your most up to date details, preferably including an email address.



Produced for you by:

Better Returns Programme  
AHDB Beef & Lamb  
Stoneleigh Park  
Kenilworth  
Warwickshire  
CV8 2TL

**T: 024 7647 8834**

**E: [brp@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:brp@ahdb.org.uk)**

**W: [ahdb.org.uk](http://ahdb.org.uk)**

**🐦 @AHDB\_BeefLamb**

**📘 @AHDBBeefandLamb**

If you no longer wish to receive this information, please email us on the address above.

While the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board seeks to ensure that the information contained within this document is accurate at the time of printing, no warranty is given in respect thereof and, to the maximum extent permitted by law, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board accepts no liability for loss, damage or injury howsoever caused (including that caused by negligence) or suffered directly or indirectly in relation to information and opinions contained in or omitted from this document.

© Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board 2020.  
All rights reserved.



# BEEF & LAMB: at the forefront of food production

The past few months have tested the resilience of us all. But what it has shown is that our industry is very good at adapting when presented with a challenge. At AHDB we had to adapt quickly as well by flexing our resources when we realised there was an issue with carcase imbalance in beef, and cuts such as steaks were not selling in the shops.

Our Make it Steak campaign, a collaboration with QMS and HCC, set out to encourage people to buy steak, by providing recipe inspiration. The campaign has now flexed to focus on rekindling consumers' love of lamb.

While we start to return to more normal times, we'll continue to adapt to new ways of working. This means we'll carry on with our online events, which many of you have already been attending, while starting up some on-farm events where and when it is safe to do so.

We must make sure we don't lose sight of the challenges ahead of us. Brexit negotiations are still ongoing, and we must make sure we are in the right position to tackle any

changes as a result. AHDB will continue its analysis and update our Brexit information as we move closer to the deadline at the end of the year.

We must also not lose sight of the other challenges affecting the industry. Towards the latter part of last year, we had numerous challenges on the reputation of red meat, particularly from misinformation on its impact on the environment in the UK. This continues to be a priority at AHDB to make sure we not only have information at hand that we can share widely, but also to look at what we as an industry can do to improve our environmental performance. Jon Foot, who joined AHDB last year, explains more about this on page 4.

And even though many things have slowed during the Covid-19 pandemic, our export team have been working behind the scenes to ensure red meat from the UK will be accessible to more people around the world. Read more about this on page 23.







# CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

## on red meat and the environment

**Jon Foot, Head of Environment and Resource Management, explains how robust scientific evidence was used to successfully counter climate change and livestock claims.**



I've joined the industry at a very challenging time, when considerable, positive steps had already been taken to achieve a more environmentally friendly industry. Last summer the NFU published the Net Zero Farming 2040 Goals. This set an ambitious and broad framework for the industry to get behind, to help it contribute to the delivery of the UK's goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. However, at the same time, many criticised the industry for its contribution to global climate change.

This was a baptism of fire and we had to pull together the evidence to show how sustainable UK agriculture is versus the global averages. Our robust scientific evidence was used to successfully counter climate change and livestock claims well into 2020 with Veganuary activity including challenging the BBC, Quorn and the Committee on Climate Change.

In January we began to develop our new five-year environment programme. We also supported the NFU's Climate Challenge



and the Role of Livestock event in Exeter, where we discussed how the sector has an important role to play in protecting and enhancing our rural landscapes. Looking solely at carbon emissions can result in unintended consequences, or poor environmental outcomes by moving emissions to countries with lower environmental and welfare standards. This could also result in local issues in those countries; for example, with water availability and significant biodiversity loss. We must take a holistic view across various issues to find the optimum outcomes for farmers, society and the environment.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, public concerns about the environment moved up the list of issues affecting what food consumers eat and how they buy it. More than half of the UK public was more worried about climate change in the past 12 months and two-thirds suggested limiting air travel and moving to electric cars sooner. The UK livestock industry has been unfairly targeted, being tarred with the same brush as countries that do not have the same environmental standards.

In a world where environmental and climate change concerns continue to be at the forefront of customers' minds, we are very aware that we have to help UK agriculture to meet the demand for safe, affordable and sustainable food. This is why AHDB's new five year strategy, launching this year, will have environment and net zero embedded within all the elements of work we deliver. We believe that good business returns and good environmental performance are not mutually exclusive and that for customers to continue to buy British, we must continue to provide great tasting food, grown in Great Britain's green and pleasant land.

## Developments on carbon footprinting farms

We're developing a proposal to provide carbon footprint audits on up to 50 businesses in the AHDB Farm Excellence Programme. In the first year, the audits will include carbon footprinting, using a recognised tool that is readily available and free to use. We are not recommending the use of a particular tool because we appreciate farmers and growers may already use a customer-specified tool to meet requirements. The pilot service will also provide consultancy support to understand the results from a carbon footprint tool and help to create a plan to reduce carbon emissions.

We are in the early stages of a project to develop a system to help to collate and benchmark environmental data across all sectors. It is hoped that the tool will also help farmers to access Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) payments, when they come in.

## ENVIRONMENT RESOURCES FOR CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

Use our new resources, which provide key environmental facts for beef, lamb and dairy production and can be used to defend the reputation of our livestock sector.

[ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/red-meat-and-the-environment-the-facts](https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/red-meat-and-the-environment-the-facts)



# New resources to kick-start your direct sales business

AHDB is offering beef and lamb box kits to farmers who want to sell their meat direct to consumers. The online kits are suitable for farmers starting up a direct selling venture, as well as those already running their own scheme.

The resources have been revamped in light of the economic challenges currently facing the industry as a result of Covid-19. They include new guidance and a host of materials to help farmers make the most of the meat they sell.

During these difficult times – and following the loss of many foodservice outlets – it’s more important than ever that we help producers promote and increase demand for their meat. These kits are designed to give producers support in setting up a business.

Each downloadable beef and lamb box kit includes a cutting specification, yield guide, costing sheets, promotional materials and recipe cards.

Get yours today: [ahdb.org.uk/direct-selling-beef-and-lamb](http://ahdb.org.uk/direct-selling-beef-and-lamb)



## DIRECT SELLING – FIRST STEPS TO GETTING STARTED

Before you start selling meat direct to the public, it’s always best to check requirements with your local Trading Standards office. Advice will depend on whether the meat is:

Cut and packed at the slaughterhouse	Cut and packed in the shop
Cut in a shop and packed at home	Cut and packaged at home

Also, consider how you intend to transport the meat. If via a non-refrigerated vehicle, then the packaging must keep the meat chilled below the correct temperature for 48 hours.

If you’re considering meat retailing or opening a farm shop, the Food Standards Agency has a full checklist here: [food.gov.uk/business-guidance/register-a-food-business](http://food.gov.uk/business-guidance/register-a-food-business) Guidelines on the layout of a small cutting plant are also available.

It is important to contact your Local Authority to register your food business. For free, independent advice about food industry legislation and regulations visit: [nationalcraftbutchers.co.uk](http://nationalcraftbutchers.co.uk)

# WEIGHT WATCHERS

To gain the best price for your finished stock, it is important that the meat you produce meets market expectations of weight and carcass classification.

**Carcass specifications vary depending on the end buyer, so understanding your customer's requirements is key to avoiding unnecessary penalties.**

In recent years, carcass weight has changed considerably. Consumers' purchasing habits are largely led by price and since larger carcasses produce bigger steaks and joints, the price point is too high for most people. This has led to many processors introducing caps on upper carcass weights and penalties can soon mount up if these weights are exceeded.

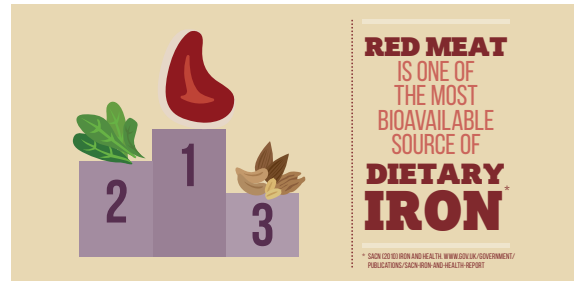
Often heavier carcasses – especially lambs – can also be overfat. It costs to trim and dispose of fat and makes the product less attractive for retail, leading to penalties for the producer. Not only that, the longer the animal is on farm, the higher the costs – weight doesn't always pay! Getting animals away to the right outlet at the right specification is essential to maximise your sales potential.

Lockdown learning for meat industry professionals from award-winning Meat Education Programme is available at [ahdb.org.uk/mep](http://ahdb.org.uk/mep)

## Fact check on red meat and nutrition

We don't need to tell you how nutritious (or delicious) beef and lamb are. However, sometimes it can be beneficial to have some prompts to help advise consumers who may be questioning the benefits of eating red meat.

We've created a series of infographics for you to share on social media to help spread the positive messages around red meat and nutrition.



These include messages such as:

- Lean red meat is packed with vitamins and minerals that help boost good health and wellbeing
- Meat is bought by 99.2% of UK households and for the majority (91%), this includes red meat (beef, lamb and pork) (Kantar Worldpanel, 52 w/e 21 April 19)
- Red meat is a valuable source of protein, iron, zinc, B vitamins, phosphorus and potassium

Download them by visiting: [ahdb.org.uk/redmeatandhealth](http://ahdb.org.uk/redmeatandhealth)

For more information, see Marketing prime beef and Marketing prime lamb manuals at [ahdb.org.uk](http://ahdb.org.uk)



# BEEFING UP our marketing

As Covid-19 began disrupting everyday life, we saw mince flying off the supermarket shelves in March. However, the industry faced a very real carcass balance issue. Gareth Renowden, Senior Marketing Manager.



*Make it*

**STEAK NIGHT**

**#MakeItSteak**

To meet consumer demand for mince, processors had to mince higher value hindquarter and steak cuts, which led to a drop in the overall retail value of the carcass and a subsequent drop in potential returns back to beef farmers.

Usually, around 20% of beef is eaten in the eating-out market, with cuts from the hindquarter – such as steak – a popular choice. With the UK in lockdown, 2.5 billion fewer eating-out occasions were predicted between April and June 2020\*.

The 'Make it Steak' campaign was launched in April, working in partnership with the Scottish and Welsh levy boards. With a marketing spend of £1.2m, the new 12 week advertising

campaign, which started in May, aims to inspire consumers to create restaurant-style meals in the comfort of their own homes.

Using delicious food photography and hindquarter cuts in its advertising, the campaign will also be supported by how to videos and cooking tips to encourage people to try dishes that are usually reserved for restaurant dining.



## Repeat success for 10th GBBW

Coincidentally, Great British Beef Week (GBBW), the annual campaign spearheaded by Ladies in Beef (LIB), was live as the steak campaign was launching. AHDB shared its insight with LIB, which responded by shifting some of the focus of its campaign to steaks. There was extra support for the wider steak activity by including industry hashtags such as #SteakNight and #feedthenation with a large message reach gained from social media activity.

## Lamb, Hits You in the Chops smashed sales

Last year AHDB launched its lamb campaign, which aimed to address a very specific industry need. The domestic lamb market has been in decline for a decade. While consumers seem to enjoy the taste of lamb, they often view it as being fatty, slow to cook, lacking in versatility and more expensive than other meats. This perception has led to consumers having lamb as a 'treat' – enjoyed, but infrequently. The EU provided a major export market for domestic lamb. However, as the UK was set to Brexit on 29 March 2019, with a very real possibility of a 'no trade' deal being in place, the lamb industry faced a surplus of approximately 100,000 tonnes

of lamb on the UK market. Not ideal for market in decline.

To prepare for this potential scenario, AHDB created a campaign to remind consumers how much they love the taste of lamb and to show them how versatile the protein can be.



With 15 weeks to execute, the campaign focused on increasing the volume of existing lamb buyers – rather than trying to convince those who do not already buy lamb – by reminding them of lamb's flavourful taste. Different ways to enjoy lamb were also demonstrated, enabling consumers to eat it more regularly.

With a marketing budget of £1.4m, working within State Aid legislation, the 'Lamb, hits you in the chops' advertising campaign was launched. Adverts were placed on radio, in national newspapers and on large outdoor billboards close to supermarkets – all reminding consumers how delicious lamb is. Working with retailers, AHDB secured various in-store promotional activities, including stickers on packs, which featured different recipes as a way to inspire and show lamb's versatility.

Farmers also got involved in helping to promote their product to consumer audiences. Several marketing materials were created to promote the campaign through farm shops and delivery services, including banners that could be hung from farm gates, shopping list pads and trolley tokens.

Follow our consumer channels to see what we're up to.

 [instagram.com/simplybeefandlamb](https://www.instagram.com/simplybeefandlamb)

 [facebook.com/simplybeefandlamb](https://www.facebook.com/simplybeefandlamb)

For further information, contact:

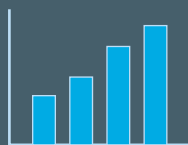
**Gareth Renowden**  
Senior Marketing Manager  
[gareth.renowden@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:gareth.renowden@ahdb.org.uk)

**LAMB  
HITS YOU IN THE  
CHOPS**

Marketing budget of  
**£1.4m**

It was the  
**most successful  
consumer  
marketing campaign  
ever delivered**  
by AHDB

All large spend AHDB  
marketing campaigns are  
**independently evaluated**  
by Kantar Worldpanel



Kantar attributed the  
campaign to an increase in  
volume sales of fresh lamb  
of **5.5%**

It delivered  
**£19.9m**  
in additional  
retail sales

Incredible  
retail sales of  
**£13.37**  
for every  
£1 spent\*

\* Source: Kantar Worldpanel FMCG Jun–Dec 2019





# Strategic Farms reap rewards from **IMPROVED GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT**

Improving grassland management has always been a top priority for the ten Strategic Farms that were recruited in 2017. Three years on, the time they've devoted to establishing rotational grazing, reseeding poorly performing paddocks and in some cases outwintering has really paid off.

## **I CAN DO THAT!**

We're recruiting five Monitor Farms this year. Taking part in the Monitor Farm programme can bring many benefits, including evaluation of your farm's strengths and weaknesses and access to AHDB specialists, industry consultants and a new network of farmers. To register your interest visit [ahdb.org.uk/farm-excellence/beef-lamb](http://ahdb.org.uk/farm-excellence/beef-lamb)





### Meet the farmer

## DAVID MONKHOUSE

David farms 110 ha, which ranges between 860 ft and 1000 ft in County Durham. He runs 300 crossbred and 250 black faced ewes as well as 80 Limousin suckler cows.

In 2018 David started rotationally grazing a small group of ewes and lambs on an 8 ha block of land. In terms of grass growth, this field outperformed similarly sized, set stocked fields, enabling David to graze at a much higher stocking rate.

Owing to this success, in 2019 David extended rotational grazing to include 300 ewes and lambs grazing 17 ha. As a result, all lambs were finished by 5 November, with no supplementary feed-shaving around three months off finishing time.

Because rotational grazing extended the grazing season, David also managed to avoid renting additional grazing for winter, which he has previously had to do. This year, David is hoping to start rotationally grazing his cattle.



### Meet the farmer

## MARK JELLEY

Mark farms in Northamptonshire with a herd of mainly Stabiliser suckler cows and a decreasing number of Hereford cross Friesian females. Mark first started rotational grazing in 2018 to increase utilisation of his grassland – particularly the ridge and furrow ground, which is unsuitable for silage production. Mark started by splitting fields up into 1 ha paddocks, factoring in water trough location. For ease, cows were grouped into bulling groups of around 30–40 and feed demand was calculated as follows:

- Cow weight 650 kg x 2.5% allocation (% bodyweight) = 16 kg dry matter (DM)
- 16 kg DM/day x 35 cows = 560 kg DM/day

Mark aimed to have target covers of 2500 kg DM/ha when the cattle were turned into the paddocks and 1500 kg DM/ha when they left. The group was moved every two days, depending on grass growth. Mark admits implementing rotational grazing hasn't been straightforward, with a drought and snapping his Achilles tendon to contend with! However even during this particularly challenging year he grew and utilised more grass than he could have done with set stocking. This meant he didn't supplement anything – despite the weather. The 2019 grazing year also started off incredibly dry. However grass growth improved during the summer months which meant Mark could increase stocking rates whilst reducing the grazing area significantly. This allowed first and second cuts of silage in three fields to be taken which normally would have been grazed under set stocked conditions. This meant Mark had more silage available resulting in less reliance on concentrates.



### Meet the farmer

## JOHN HAIMES

During the three year project, John had a change of strategy, moving from suckler production to dairy beef. However the focus has always been the same – to maximise beef production from grass and forage. John farms 230 ha in south Devon and recently made the decision to sell his suckler herd.

During the project John has implemented rotational grazing and started outwintering. During winter 2019, 177 13–24 month old

cattle were outwintered on permanent pasture, with a recently seeded herbal ley plus grass silage. Cattle were moved each day and provided with 0.65 ha/day of grazing, plus six bales of silage. John minimised damage to the ground throughout the wet winter by regularly moving the cattle and ensuring the grass wedge had built up to 3000 kg DM/ha. Cattle growth rates were slightly disappointing, however, with a range of 0.3–0.5 kg/day. To rectify this, John aims to improve silage quality by cutting earlier and shutting paddocks up sooner to build the grass wedge up even more.



# Benefits of using FAECAL EGG COUNTS

The priority for worm control is to minimise the effect these parasites have on lamb performance. However, it is important to consider the long-term sustainability of any control programme by avoiding the reliance on wormers as the sole means of control. Find out how using FECs has impacted our Challenge Sheep farmers.

A good plan includes a long-term, regularly reviewed worming strategy, which can be adapted to cope with changing patterns from year to year. Monitoring worm burdens using faecal egg counts (FECs) can help ensure that treatments remain effective. A FEC can be used to determine if a wormer is required, test efficacy post treatment and provide guidance on the amount of contamination going onto pasture.



Using FECs has made it easier to rule out parasite burden from low daily liveweight gains. Samples can be submitted to your vet, some merchants and via a FECPAK system. The results give you a clearer picture of worm burdens on drug efficacies. It is a tool we would not be without, but it must be used alongside all other aspects of good practice, such as weighing your lambs to determine dose weight and checking the calibration of drench guns.

Check [scops.org.uk](http://scops.org.uk) for regular updates.

## About Challenge Sheep

The Challenge Sheep project is three years into the seven-year study. The aim is to develop best practice for managing replacement ewes and to understand the impact of the first year's production on a ewe's lifetime performance. With 11 farmers actively engaged in recording data for the duration of the project, there are 7,000 replacements being tracked from a variety of sheep farms across England.

To find out more visit:  
[ahdb.org.uk/challenge-sheep](http://ahdb.org.uk/challenge-sheep)

## WHY USE THE NEW GROUP 4-AD AND 5-SI WORMERS?

The two newest wormer groups (4-AD and 5-SI) should be incorporated into worm control programmes on all sheep farms – not left on the shelf until the others are no longer effective. Their real value is in prolonging the life of 1-BZ, 2-LV and 3-ML groups. There are only two occasions when a group 4-AD or 5-SI should be used and alternate between the two groups. These two occasions are during quarantine, and in the mid-to-late season as a one-off annual drench for lambs.





## Meet Challenge Sheep farmers

### ROB & ANNA HAWKE



First generation farmers Rob and Anna joined the project for the opportunity to access and exchange information with experts and farmers. As well as collecting electronic identification information, including weights, body condition score (BCS) and lambing data,

Challenge Sheep farmers have had help with monitoring their worm burden and testing the effectiveness of treatment.

Rob and Anna adopted the use of FECs early on. This involved them sending regular samples of their lambs' faeces to be tested by their vet. Before this, the lambs would have been wormed roughly every six weeks. Since joining, Rob and Anna have had access to a FECPAK, an internet-connected, image-based diagnostic platform which enables them to conduct FECs themselves, on-farm.

Since carrying out FEC testing and increasing sampling frequency, Rob and Anna been able to reduce the number of doses on average from five to just three per lamb per year. Through improving their understanding, they've been able to target specific groups of parasites and carry out post-drench checks to establish wormer efficacy.

Rob said: "In a normal year the lambs might get treated for nematodirus with a white wormer in April/May, a Class 4 or 5 at weaning in June and a dose of yellow or clear wormer in mid-to-late September. Having used FEC for some time, I would definitely recommend a post-drench FEC as a policy because I think everyone needs to know their status. More producers should use FEC, be more proactive with their parasite control and prolong the efficacy of wormer groups. Not only that, there are large cost savings to be made by only worming when necessary.

"We've discovered our worm burden peaks in late autumn, and from doing our own testing we are gradually building a picture of each block of land. This enables us to restrict resistance issues in each block individually."







# SALE ONLINE

Signet has moved the sale of breeding stock online.  
Sam Boon, Animal Breeding Senior Manager.



## EBVs elevate flock performance

The latest RamCompare results clearly demonstrate the value of using estimated breeding values (EBVs) to select rams, with gains of £3–4 per lamb achieved through careful sire selection.

Now in its fifth year, RamCompare, the UK's commercial progeny test for terminal sire rams, has assessed the performance of over 19,000 commercial lambs sired by 211 rams. Farm data is used to enhance the EBVs produced in the National Terminal Sire Evaluation (delivered by Signet) and abattoir data has generated new EBVs for a variety of carcass traits.

Rams are ranked annually, based on overall genetic merit. This helps farmers select the most profitable rams for their flock, regardless of breed.

## Ram buying recommendations updated

While abattoir-derived breeding values, such as carcass weight and conformation, are only available for rams tested as part of RamCompare, existing breeding values for traits such as scan weight and muscle depth can be used with confidence to select more profitable rams.

**Signet**   
BREEDING SERVICES



## Assessing the quality of animals in online sales using EBVs

The continuing Covid-19 situation has resulted in many breeding sales being cancelled, leaving many without a way to buy or sell breeding stock.

To counteract this, Signet has moved the sale of breeding stock online. This gives farmers from across the country the chance to see what performance recorded animals and semen are available.

However, when trying to assess quality, using online sales can be challenging. A great way to review an animal's genetic merit, and the best way to compare breeding potential, is to use EBVs.



It's important to select sires that are well matched to your system and you must choose the EBVs that are best suited to improve your flock's performance.

For example, if you want to reduce the days to slaughter, you would select using scan weight – checking rams against the breed benchmark and only picking rams from the top 25% of the breed. There are specific benchmarks for each breed and these are updated yearly.

For further information, contact:

### Sam Boon

Animal Breeding Senior Manager  
[samuel.boon@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:samuel.boon@ahdb.org.uk)

## Meet the farmer – Thistleyhaugh Farm DUNCAN NELLESS



“We've seen the benefit of using high-index sires. Over four years, our lambs have consistently killed out with heavier carcasses, drawn at the same weight and a higher percentage fall into the 2–3L specification. We're convinced of the importance of EBVs for rams and would choose future replacements based on this.”

## Meet the farmer – Bradley Farm PHILIP WHITEHOUSE



“EBVs are far more important than a ram's appearance and condition. The lambs produced over four years, from all rams supplied, have produced quality lambs, apparent from an early age. To remain successful in this industry, we must drive down the cost of production. It is clear to us that genetics plays an important part in that.”

## Meet the farmer – Hendre Ifan Goch Farm RHYS EDWARDS



“We wanted to be part of RamCompare to see if EBVs actually work. There is a lot of negativity around figures so we wanted to put them to test with thorough data analysis on our farm. In just two years, we have seen massive benefits. From two rams of the same breed, treated under the same conditions, we have seen a difference of price in the pocket of £5.55 per lamb, so it definitely adds up.

“We now believe we can choose a ram based on figures and have confidence that he will sire lambs that grow quickly off grass, grade well and will be sold from our hill farm by the end of October.”

## SOURCING SIRES JUST GOT SIMPLER

A key decision for any sheep farmer is sire selection. The sire affects the performance of lambs and will affect most marketing and management decisions throughout the year.

Signetdata.com has updated its database to make finding a sire via the animal's ID, breed or genetic merit quicker and easier so you can select the best animals for your commercial flock that reflect your breeding objectives. Flock Finder

and Herd Finder hold data on recorded ram and bull breeders, so it is easy for commercial producers to search for breeders in their local area.

Plus, breeders using Signet to performance record their flocks now also have access to new reports. These include a new scanning report to find the sheep with the best muscling in their flock, and tools such as the inbreeding calculator.





# CHEWING THE CUD

Improving grassland management on suckler farms with the Beef from Grass project. Sarah Pick, Knowledge Exchange Manager.



## Improving grassland management on suckler farms

Results from the Beef from Grass project are now in. The project found by implementing new grassland management strategies, including rotational grazing and reseeded, improved the quantity and quality of grass, leading to increased stocking rates, better daily liveweight gains (DLWG) and bigger profits. The project tracked the progress of four suckler producers who wanted to improve their grassland management.

The project targeted three key areas to increase profitability and reduce costs of production:

1. Reduce the number of days cattle are housed
2. Increase stocking rates across the grazing platform
3. Increase in growth rates from grazing, silage and forage



During the project, the farmers implemented several grassland improvement practices, including rotational grazing, reseeding poor performing paddocks and outwintering. These changes were gradual and continuous.

Most started by rotationally grazing a bulling group of suckler cows. Being the simplest animals to manage, it is often easiest to start with this group. Rotational grazing resulted in more grass being grown and utilised. Grass quality also increased and weed burdens in older pastures were reduced. This meant stocking rates could be increased, resulting in higher liveweight production per hectare, which – in turn – produced a higher gross margin per hectare.

### Average performance of the four suckler producers involved in the project

Performance parameters	Year			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Gross margin per hectare (£)	419	649	778	653
Liveweight per hectare (kg)	110	262	323	388
Housing duration (weeks)	12	12	7	5
Liveweight gain (kg/day)	1.07	1.10	1.15	1.15

Rotational grazing also extended the grazing season, thereby decreasing the length of the housing period. On farms where outwintering was possible, housing period length was reduced even further. Suckler cows and youngstock were outwintered on a variety of forages, including fodder beet, stubble turnips, forage rye and deferred grass. This led to less silage being made, less straw required for bedding and a reduction in machinery used, which lowered both variable and fixed costs.

The farms monitored grass growth throughout the year by taking weekly measurements in each paddock and entering the results into AgriNet. This helped to identify poor performing paddocks that required reseeding. Reseeding is a great way to improve the amount of grass grown. However it is important to first tackle issues that may have reduced output including inadequate crop nutrition and soil compaction.



The project has highlighted the huge benefits that improved grassland management can bring to beef enterprises. Unfortunately drought during the 2018 grazing year affected profitability. However it is expected that gross margins for 2019 will approach £1,000 per hectare, which is similar to the gross margin obtained from conventionally grown winter wheat.

### Join our discussion groups

We currently have five grassland discussion groups which were formed with consultants. The aim of the groups is to help producers to improve their grassland management and develop their grazing strategies. If you're interested in joining, please contact the consultants directly.

- **Devon and Cornwall** (beef and sheep)  
Luppo Diepenbroek (luppod@gmail.com)
- **Dorset** (beef and sheep)  
Tim Bowden (tim.bowden@fwagsw.org.uk)
- **Herefordshire and Shropshire** (beef and sheep)  
Charlie Morgan (charliemorgan462@btinternet.com)
- **Rutland** (sheep)  
Liz Genever (liz@lizgenever.com)
- **Northumberland** (beef and sheep)  
Rhidian Jones (rjlivestocksystems@btinternet.com)

For further information, contact:

**Sarah Pick**  
Knowledge Exchange Manager  
[sarah.pick@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:sarah.pick@ahdb.org.uk)



### Meet the farmer, grassland discussion group host farm **NICK KEENLYSIDE**

Producing store cattle for a neighbouring finishing farm, Nick has 131 suckler cows, 29 in-calf heifers and 153 youngstock on 120 ha in Newcastle.

“The grazing group has helped my business, primarily with the technical advice I’ve received.

“The farm visits have opened my mind to new ideas and have allowed me to discuss issues with like-minded people. I’ve made lots of new contacts and it’s a really enthusiastic group. I can now see deficiencies in my own

system that I wasn’t aware of before and it’s made me look objectively at every aspect of my business.

“I’ve made some big changes since joining the group: paddock grazing, forward creep grazing and using Kiwitech microtroughs, for starters. Learning from others, I’ve implemented more extensive and in-depth soil testing, too.

“I definitely want the group to continue – there’s no question! I welcome more meetings and look forward to hearing from more varied speakers in the future.”



# Outwintering: all the ins and outs

It can seem daunting to start outwintering, but big gains can be made by planning and utilising your existing resources.

All farmers should have a business plan which includes a feed budget so they know what they are aiming to achieve each year. This can help to focus time and resources and cut costs. If the farm and soil conditions allow, there may be an option to extend the grazing period and reduce the housing period. But careful planning is the key to success.

One way to extend the grazing period is to use brassica fodder crops such as kale, forage rape, turnips, swedes and rape/kale hybrids. These crops can help to:

- Reduce feed costs
- Reduce winter housing costs
- Reduce labour and machinery (less feeding, less silage making, less manure handling)
- Reduce fuel use and carbon footprint
- Reduce exposure to forage shortage
- Enhance low input systems
- Increase output per unit of land
- Avoid housing related health issues
- Expand production without additional capital costs
- Grow an alternative break crop in arable and grazing rotations
- Produce high DM yield in short growing seasons

**Outwintering animals will eat 15% more than housed animals because they have a higher energy requirement**

## FOUR KEY INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL OUTWINTERING

1. **Dry land** – soil type, rainfall, shelter
2. **Enthusiasm** – you need to want to make it work
3. **Offer long fibre** – straw or silage
4. **Offer minerals** – deficiencies can be an issue with brassicas

Brassicas should be fed with ad lib forage to maintain rumen health. Leaving bales at intervals across the field can help reduce traffic on wet ground.

Another way to extend the grazing season is to use deferred grazing. To do this you must remove livestock from grassland in late summer, to grow a wedge of grass to feed in late autumn and early winter. It's important to graze the grass well before shutting it up so that feed quality is maintained and the amount of dead matter in the field is reduced. Block or strip grazing the fields enables better utilisation. The feed value can be lower, so you need to consider the types of stock and monitor their growth.

For more information check out webinars: Making a success of outwintering cattle and Outwintering options for sheep at: [ahdb.org.uk/webinars](http://ahdb.org.uk/webinars)

### The short straw

Because of the difficult planning season, ask yourself if you'll have enough straw for bedding in winter 2020.

Check out our bedding directory for straw alternatives: [ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/the-bedding-materials-directory](http://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/the-bedding-materials-directory)







# How big is **TOO BIG?**

### **Optimising mature weight for farm efficiency and profitability**

Bigger cows and ewes will generally produce larger calves and lambs, but breeding for increased growth rate has tended to produce larger mature sizes. This all sounds great, but there are important aspects to consider. Larger animals in the breeding herd or flock have a higher maintenance requirement, eat more and must therefore be stocked at a lower density. And with processors implementing increasingly tight weight limits on slaughtered animals, it is vital to choose the correct breeding female for your system.

An AHDB-funded project sought to determine the implications of differences in breeding female mature weight, based on how changing breeding female mature weight affects other traits in the farm system. The impact on the costs and revenues on a typical farm was also assessed. While there is no perfect mature size for all systems, the project identified optimum mature sizes in several different scenarios.

The key is to think about what size suits your system and to make sure you source breeding stock that meets that requirement. The main factor determining differences between farms is the availability of quality forage to maintain the intake of heavier cows without having to buy in feed.

### **Reflections on lambing and calving**

Now's the perfect time to reflect on lambing and calving in 2020 and to consider making changes to improve performance next year.

AHDB is working on a research project to help farmers improve survival of neonatal lambs and calves. It looks at current

practice on sheep and beef farms in Great Britain, defines the barriers and enablers to improve neonatal survival and explores the causes of neonatal lamb mortality and disease. Due to complete in autumn 2020, the results will help to develop and pilot a neonatal survival control plan.

Check out the interim results for ideas of improvements you can make in your business: [ahdb.org.uk/development-of-an-integrated-neonatal-survival-and-sustainable-antibiotic-plan](https://ahdb.org.uk/development-of-an-integrated-neonatal-survival-and-sustainable-antibiotic-plan)





# Market Intelligence IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Reflecting on coronavirus and its impact on AHDB's Market Intelligence work. Phil Bicknell, MI Director.



**We all know that coronavirus has impacted on beef and sheep markets. Whether it's been the initial dip in farmgate prices, the closure of foodservice markets, or the subsequent impact on supermarket sales (9.2% increase in beef sales at the time of writing), the bottom line is that market dynamics have shifted.**

Of course, knowing what's happening to supply, demand and prices is critical for any farmer. AHDB's core services all feed in to that accurate picture of what's happening, whether it's monitoring prices, analysing trade data, assessing demand, or tracking red meat throughput.

Readership of our analytical features has risen dramatically – up to tenfold for some pieces. Similarly, subscriptions to our newsletters and magazines has grown rapidly. Don't get me wrong, AHDB's beef and lamb prices are consistently among the most visited pages on our website. Our Cattle and Sheep Weekly newsletter lands in thousands of inboxes every week. And for those, like me, that read the farming press from back to front, the prices provided by AHDB will be one of the first things that you scan through. However, there's no avoiding that the uncertainty created by coronavirus has seen increasing demand for AHDB's Market Intelligence in recent weeks.

We have adapted our analysis and insight to make it even more valuable in these uncertain times. The volumes of 'lost' demand from the closure of foodservice outlets have been pinpointed. We have invested in weekly tracking of retail sales to give an increased level of detail about how demand for beef, lamb, pork, dairy and potatoes has changed. A big focus for Market Intelligence has been assessing the emerging carcass balance problem, given the increased demand for mince and slower demand for hindquarter cuts. More broadly, it's this analysis that has helped support the business case for the roll out of the Make it Steak marketing campaign.

There's no doubt that coronavirus has been a huge challenge for the agrifood sector. And most would recognise that, on the whole, industry has responded positively, particularly as measured by food availability and choice on shelves. However, we should also be conscious that there are fundamental policy developments still happening that will impact our industry in the shape of the Agriculture Bill and trade discussions. With these issues having a bigger impact on farming prospects in the long run, you will find a continued focus from the team on issues like tariffs, trade and the outlook for international competitors. Both policy changes and the coronavirus challenges underline that our world is changing. Prices, markets

and supplies shift continuously. And our customers and competition are increasingly global.

Ultimately, better information supports better business decisions. Yet as farmers, we've never had so much data available to us and making sense of all this information has never seemed so challenging. This is where AHDB will continue to help, with our independent evidence and expertise, whether it's the latest prices or shifting consumer trends, detailed insight on the big issues or the future outlook for supply or demand for agricultural commodities.

For live Market Intelligence updates, visit: [ahdb.org.uk/markets-and-prices](https://ahdb.org.uk/markets-and-prices)

Update your contact details to subscribe to Cattle and Sheep Weekly and MI Outlook now: [ahdb.org.uk/keeping-in-touch](https://ahdb.org.uk/keeping-in-touch)

For further information, contact:

**Phil Bicknell**  
MI Director  
[phil.bicknell@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:phil.bicknell@ahdb.org.uk)







# Upskill with us

Two of AHDB's most popular courses are the Professional Manager Development Scheme (PMDS) and the Effective Manager Programme (EMP).

Both courses focus on getting more out of yourself and putting the learning into action including improving your time management, delegation and decision making skills. They also explore how you work with employees, contractors and non-employed staff – the latter of which is key in the beef and lamb sector.

The communication and planning skills learned during these courses can have a positive impact on your working relationship with family members. Improving these skill areas can have wide ranging benefits for your business by getting better results from yourself, your staff and your partners, resulting in improved financial performance, smoother negotiations and a better work-life balance.

Reminder: our courses restart in autumn. To register your interest visit [ahdb.org.uk/management-courses](http://ahdb.org.uk/management-courses)

Plus, check out our monthly webinars, available online at [ahdb.org.uk/skills](http://ahdb.org.uk/skills)



## Meet course attendee **ELAINE HIGGINS**

Family-owned sheep enterprise in Shropshire, 1,400 breeding ewes

“My role is primarily to manage seasonal staff during peak seasons. These people are temporary external members of staff; some are returning, while others are new to our business. This work involves planning days, weeks and months ahead.

“I wanted to join the programme to improve my communication and overall management skills including planning of staff workload. I wanted to have a better understanding of health and safety issues affecting staff. I hope to improve my management style and increase staff productivity and welfare.

“I’ve got a lot out of the conversations I’ve had with other delegates. There’s been lots of sharing hints and tips and



peer-to-peer learning which has been really helpful.

“I’ve mainly focused on lambing and managing people’s motivators. Tempers can fray at that time of year, so I’ve managed potential arguments. The powers of a cup of tea and slice of cake are really underestimated!

“I’ve just taken on a new role outside of the family farm, so I have to start from the beginning with making friends, building trust and networking. However all of the skills I’ve learned are transferable which has been valuable – especially in planning and prioritising workload.”



# AHDB opens doors for exports around the world

Last year we had much to celebrate with the value of red meat exports from the UK rocketing to more than £1.5bn – making 2019 one of the strongest years on record.

AHDB has a unique role to play in growing red meat exports, working with government to gain market access around the world. Last year Japan lifted its long-standing ban on UK beef and lamb – a deal worth around £127m over the first five years. Then came news that Chinese government officials had signed a protocol agreement to ship beef from the UK for the first time in 20 years. Worth another £230m over the first five years, this provides a significant boost to the supply chain.

Further good news followed, with the USA agreeing to accept beef imports from the UK.

Despite the challenges we face this year with coronavirus and Brexit, work continues as we seek to build on the impressive wins of 2019. We have ambitions to secure access for lamb to both China and Taiwan and, in the longer term, beef to South Korea and Vietnam – creating further opportunities for our red meat exports.

But AHDB's work doesn't end there. Once access is secured, AHDB's Export team help to support businesses to develop these new markets and take full advantage of the opportunities they present.

We also achieve this through the use of agents, who are based in key markets around the world. Their role is vital and as such, we have made the decision to further strengthen our team with additional agents in China, Japan, the USA and the Middle East, where there is great potential for growth.

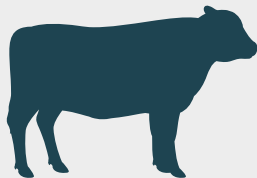
The work of AHDB Exports continues at pace and in this post-Brexit era it's vital that we take a strategic look at broadening the opportunities for our red meat and continue to play a major role in strengthening our export economy.

For more information on Exports activity, visit: [ahdb.org.uk/exports](http://ahdb.org.uk/exports)

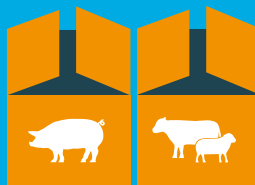
## 2019 EXPORTS OF BEEF, LAMB AND PORK

**183,000 TONNES** OF BEEF AND OFFAL EXPORTED - WORTH

**£532 MILLION**



THE TOTAL VALUE OF RED MEAT EXPORTS ROSE **13%** YEAR-ON-YEAR



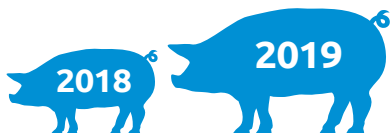
WITH MORE THAN **661,000 TONNES** OF PORK, LAMB AND BEEF SHIPPED AROUND THE WORLD

RED MEAT EXPORTS FROM THE UK ROCKETED TO MORE THAN **£1.5 BILLION**



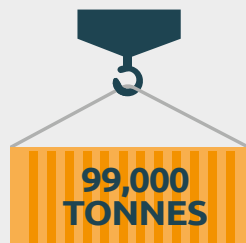
THE UK EXPORTED **378,000 TONNES** OF PIG MEAT AND OFFAL - WORTH

**£609 MILLION**



A RISE OF **24%** COMPARED TO 2018

SHEEP MEAT SHIPMENTS ROSE **12.5%** TO



WITH A VALUE OF **£402 MILLION**

IN 2019 UK PIG MEAT AND OFFAL EXPORTS TO CHINA INCREASED BY **61%** TO **131,000 TONNES**





# NEWS & UPDATES

## New look for TB hub

TBhub.co.uk has a new look – making its valuable information even easier to access for farmers dealing with a tuberculosis breakdown and those who want to protect their herd from TB. The site is home to a wealth of resources including videos, podcasts and factsheets, as well as in-depth articles.

TB hub covers everything from biosecurity measures and testing through to understanding cattle trading rules. Along with guidance on minimising the impact of TB, the hub also provides information on the things farmers can do to reduce the risk of TB getting into their herds, both from cattle movements and wildlife.

## New Recommended Grass and Clover List

Knowing the performance characteristics allows grassland producers to select varieties that will perform well for their system.

When selecting a reseeding mixture, check the varieties included are on the List. Did you know that fewer than 1 in 20 varieties make it onto the RGCL?

Check the mixture – is it right for your needs. How long do you want the ley down? Are you going to graze it, silage it, or both?

And remember to ask yourself which varieties will fit the job. Discuss your needs with your merchant so they can help you.

## WE'VE GONE DIGITAL

Unfortunately we've had to cancel our on-farm events this year due to the ongoing situation. However we're now hosting digital events online with our AHDB specialists, independent experts and partner farmers. Find out what's on by visiting: [ahdb.org.uk/events](https://ahdb.org.uk/events)

## REDUCING WASTE, IMPROVING EFFICIENCIES

We will no longer be sending event invitations by post. This is to help reduce costs so your levy can be spent on valuable projects, publications, research and marketing activities. Please update your details, especially if you don't think we have your email address or mobile number to inform you about events.

- Do this online by visiting [ahdb.org.uk/keeping-in-touch](https://ahdb.org.uk/keeping-in-touch)
- Call us on: 024 7647 8694
- Or write to us: AHDB CRM team, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2TL



## UPDATED PUBLICATIONS AND MANUALS

- *Reducing lameness for Better Returns*
- *Growing and finishing lambs for Better Returns*
- *Recommended Grass and Clover Lists (included with this edition)*
- *Establishing and growing clover*
- *Beef production from the dairy herd*
- Online only resource: *Electric fencing*

## NEW WEBINARS AND PODCASTS

- Sustainable worm control in youngstock
- Using clover in cattle and sheep systems
- Outwintering cattle and sheep
- Podcast: Worm control in lambs
- Podcast: A livestock farmer's view
- Podcast: Preparations for outwintering

Establishing and growing clover

AHDB



BETTERRETURNS  
Reducing lameness for Better Returns



BETTERRETURNS  
Growing and finishing lambs for Better Returns



BETTERRETURNS  
Beef production from the dairy herd

