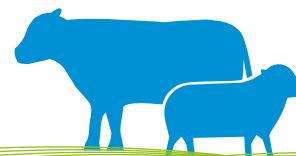


# The BULLETIN

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE BETTER RETURNS PROGRAMME

AHDB



Autumn 2018



## Dosing accuracy benefits from weighing on a strategic farm

Page 9



**New recruits needed for  
progressive groups**

Page 3



**Celebrating Challenge Sheep**

Page 6



**The impact of 2018 season  
on silage production**

Page 7



# Research and development focused on practical advice

One of the key parts of AHDB's 'Inspiring Success' strategy is to accelerate innovation and productivity growth through coordinated research and development (R&D) and knowledge exchange (KE). As part of this, we have set a target to increase farm profitability, per hectare, over a four-year period of five per cent. This will be measured by comparing performance of approved Farmbench users benchmarking for any two consecutive years, indexed to remove volatility.

To be able to achieve our target, we have ongoing work across both sectors, with projects including RamCompare to help increase the use of Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) on farm, along with work to enable the breeding of sheep with genetic resistance to worms. On the cattle side, we have the Beef Feed Efficiency Programme, which aims to enable the selection of animals that eat less but grow at the same rate, which will mean more efficient beef production.

AHDB Beef & Lamb funds around 25 research projects every year, as well as a number of PhD studentships, with the aim of generating practical outcomes that the industry can adopt. Now in its fourth edition, this year's R&D review provides a useful summary of some of the research projects being carried out on behalf of the industry, including key findings from completed projects and updates on current research.

Growing resistance to antibiotics is an important issue, not just for human health but also for the livestock industry, with pressure from Government to reduce usage by 2020. We have a number of projects across the beef and lamb sectors to help us better understand the use of antibiotics on beef and sheep farms, as well as work to help farmers improve the health of their livestock so there is less need for antibiotics in the first place.

As well as being heavily involved in the industry Targets Task Force (TTF), AHDB is playing a key role in delivering the beef targets, working with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and Farm Vet Systems to investigate the potential for veterinary sales data to provide an indication of antibiotic use in the beef sector. A pilot for an electronic medicine book for cattle is also planned, which will provide a way of collecting antibiotic use across the industry.

As well as an update on the antibiotics work, the review also includes information on the following projects:

- Breeding for parasite resistance
- Reviewing chronic wasting diseases in sheep
- Challenge Sheep
- Beef in arable rotations
- Grass and herbal leys network



Liz Genever  
AHDB Senior Sheep Scientist

If you would like more information on all the activity we are involved in, as well as resources that have been produced from our R&D work, you can view a copy of the R&D review here:

[beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/research](http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/research)



## AHDB – Have your say

Farmers, growers, processors and industry representatives are being asked for their views on the future role and remit of AHDB.

As we leave the EU, there is an opportunity to ensure the sectors that AHDB covers are as competitive as possible.

This government-led review, open until midnight on Friday 9 November, will look at AHDB's purpose and priorities, its strengths and where improvements can be made.

For more information and details on how to respond, please visit [www.ahdb.org.uk/requestforviews](http://www.ahdb.org.uk/requestforviews)



# New recruits needed for progressive groups

**Recruitment has started for the next two groups of forward-thinking English beef and lamb farmers to be part of AHDB Beef & Lamb's progressive groups.**

The two groups will meet twice a year for a three-year period and aim to develop members' technical and business skills by providing access to industry experts. Group members will take part in visits and discussions that will challenge their current thinking, encourage sharing of new ideas and motivate participants to improve the efficiency and profitability of their own business.

The groups will look at various aspects of livestock production, including:

- Health and fertility
- Nutrition and feed planning
- Selection for slaughter and meat processing and marketing
- Breeding
- Profit generation, developing business and management skills, including benchmarking

All producers will need to enter their data into the Farmbench business tool to be able to identify areas which need to be improved.



Current progressive beef group producer, Tim Phipps, said: "The group has given me the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues with people with similar interests to myself. Often, the best discussions were had at the end of the day over dinner and I've implemented changes based on others' experiences. I have gained a huge amount of knowledge from the progressive beef group and I'd really

recommend the groups to anyone looking to have a greater perspective on the industry we work in, in order to drive their business forward."

To download an application form, visit: [ahdb.org.uk/returns](https://ahdb.org.uk/returns)

The closing date for applications is 31 December 2018. The first meeting will be June 2019.

## Designing a new Livestock Traceability Programme (LIP)

**Earlier this year, we announced that an agreement had been signed between AHDB and Defra setting out how AHDB could develop a new multi-species livestock traceability service for England. The initiative was instigated by key industry stakeholders and is set to be rolled out from 2019.**

This development followed an announcement from Defra in April about the go-ahead of the service, providing the foundation for some of the best farm-to-fork traceability in the world. The heads of agreement was signed during a visit to AHDB's Stoneleigh Park headquarters by Farming Minister George Eustice.

Key industry stakeholders, represented by the Traceability Design User



Group (TDUG), have been involved in developing the vision and design principles and determining how all parties can work together. The new service will add value for the livestock sectors, as well as providing a statutory service that will better protect against disease and bolster trade negotiations.

AHDB Chief Executive Jane King said: "AHDB is in a unique position to be able to lead the collaboration between government and industry in order to

deliver a future traceability service which is truly transformational.

"By working closely with industry through TDUG, we will ensure that the needs of the user are at the heart of the developing service, resulting in a system that delivers for farmers and processors across the livestock sectors."

More information will be released in the coming months following the initial agreement.

# Working with St Merryn to hit specification

As part of a group of initiatives being undertaken with the beef and lamb supply chain, AHDB has linked with one of St Merryn's supplier farms to carry out a programme of activity geared towards enhancing the proportion and consistency of stock hitting retail specification. The project, which launched in May, is looking at improving the productivity and efficiency of production to ensure the long-term sustainability of livestock enterprises.

Broadaford Farm is a third-generation family farm located in the centre of Dartmoor National Park. The farm currently runs 500 sheep and 50 cows and sits at 1,000 feet. With an average annual rainfall of around 72 inches, the grass-growing season is limited to between April and September, making it particularly challenging to finish stock as quickly and efficiently as possible to fit within the required retail specification.

With a percentage of beef sold as stores, the project focus is predominantly on lamb production, which is all finished on farm and supplied into St Merryn, Merthyr. The farm has been benchmarked using AHDB's Farmbench programme, which

enables the farm to compare itself against national averages and identify areas of improvement. It will also give the farm the opportunity to benchmark against themselves to monitor their own progress. As there is little scope to physically extend the available grazing, the ability to increase productivity from the existing land is imperative. Focusing on grassland management is therefore essential, with other areas of focus including exploring building design to help maximise the health status of stock, monitoring daily liveweight gain and reducing the use of antibiotics.

As part of the project, some St Merryn producer club members have formed a group around the farm, to both engage with activity but also to input ideas and promote discussion to enable successful farmer-to-farmer learning.

This work is part of AHDB Beef & Lamb's Inspiring Success strategy that looks to continually improve the beef and lamb sectors and create sustainable industries. More information can be found here: [beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/about/ahdb-beef-lamb-strategy](https://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/about/ahdb-beef-lamb-strategy)

## Optimising pasture-based sheep systems

**Improving the efficiency of production systems is a long-term goal for many sheep farmers. Increasing demand for high-quality produce, coupled with the looming uncertainty of post-Brexit agriculture, means that responding to this challenge has never been more critical. Andy Jones is an AHDB-funded PhD student based at Rothamsted Research and is developing a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) to help drive the efficiency of sheep-grazing systems across England.**

The KPIs will help farmers to identify priorities throughout the year, by identifying flock issues such as lamb health and ewe fertility, predict future animal performance and benchmark the efficiency of the entire system.

The initial work is being carried out at Rothamsted's North Wyke Farm Platform in Devon, which investigates short-term and long-term consequences of adopting different grazing systems within its three 20ha 'farmlets'. Each farmlet supports a separate sheep flock and the highly detailed livestock performance data that has been generated will help KPI development.

Early analysis has focused on the impact of early lamb growth rates on finishing age, carcass quality and economic value. The cost-benefit of recording lamb weights at birth, at eight weeks of age and at weaning will be investigated due to their value in predicting future performance. Once promising performance indicators have been shortlisted, validation work will be conducted on English sheep farms within AHDB's farm network to assess their usefulness and the practicalities when used by farmers.







## Strategic farmers' struggle to source high-quality replacement heifers

**Replacement heifers are the lifeblood of a herd and a valuable source of new genetics. They contribute to the genetic make-up, cost structure and productivity of the herd, so having the right type of animal is crucial for long-term herd profitability.**

Over the past year, a common theme raised by our network of Strategic Farms has been the lack of high-quality replacement heifers available to buy. The advantage of purchasing heifers is that all cows are bred to a terminal sire and there are fewer groups of stock on the farm. It also allows for more breeding cows to be kept.

With a number of the strategic farms struggling to source replacement heifers with the right genetic potential, many are now investigating options to retain home-bred replacements. Successful breeding of home-bred replacements relies on making a conscious decision to use a sire with strong maternal traits on some of the herd's best cows.

For the last five years, Cumbrian strategic farmer, Edward Dean, has been using artificial insemination (AI) to breed his own replacements. As a strategic farmer, he's now got the opportunity to look at improving conception rates by installing heat-detection software. This is something which is often used within the dairy industry, but less so in the suckler industry, and will help ensure cows are served at the optimum time.

"AI is a no-brainer for me – instead of buying another bull, it's cheaper to AI and I can select the genetics that I'm looking for. Also, if we don't get the results we want, we can try again with different semen without having the cost of buying and keeping bulls.

"It's worked well in the past and we've had a 70 per cent success rate, but we want to improve that conception rate further and be able to AI twice as many as what the bull can serve. The new heat-detection software will notify us as to when we can serve the heifers and hopefully we'll get good results from this in the autumn," explained Edward.

If breeding replacements on-farm isn't an option, farmers need to make sure they are thinking about the following when purchasing replacement heifers:

### Strong maternal traits

Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) provide an assessment of an animal's breeding potential for a specific trait. There are many EBVs that relate to maternal performance, but the main ones to consider are:

- Calving ease; including calving ease direct, calving ease maternal and birthweight EBVs
- Fertility; including age at first calving, scrotal circumference and calving interval EBVs
- Growth; including 200-day growth and 200-day milk EBV

### Target service weight

At breeding, it is recommended that heifers weigh at least 65 per cent of their mature weight. When purchasing heifers, it is therefore important to consider whether they will reach this weight by service. Heifers who don't reach this target weight may extend the calving period or, if held back another year, increase maintenance costs.

### Understanding heifer health status

Buying in stock is the most common way for new diseases to arrive on farm. Before agreeing to a purchase, it is crucial to ask the vendor if they are in an accredited health scheme, what diseases they test for and, more importantly, what the results are.

Whether looking to purchase or breed replacement heifers, farmers should speak to their vet to explore the options and put a replacement plan in place. For more information, read the BRP manual 'Managing replacement heifers' or BRP+ 'Breeding female replacements for the suckler herd', available at [beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns](http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns)



# Celebrating Challenge Sheep

Autumn marks the start of the second year of AHDB's Challenge Sheep project, with tracking now starting on the second group of replacements. Eleven farms across England are being tracked over a range of systems, including breeding ewe lambs or shearlings, home-bred or purchased and cross-bred or pure-bred replacements. Over 8,000 replacements will be tracked from tupping 2017 and 2018 over their reproductive lifetime.

In the first year, the focus is on the impact of the ewe lambs and shearlings reaching the weight target at tupping, (60 per cent and 80 per cent of mature weight respectively) on their performance through their first pregnancy and lactation. The results will also be used to see if the pattern shown in Figure 1 for ewe lambs can be seen on commercial farms and whether the weight targets are the most appropriate ones. Early results are showing young sheep will rear more lambs to heavier weights if they hit their target weight at tupping. The project will also answer questions about whether

the current body condition score (BCS) is relevant to younger sheep or whether only weight should be used.

This year has been challenging for all ewes with a wet, late spring and a dry summer, but young ewes are likely to have struggled more as they need to divert energy to growth as well as maintaining a pregnancy and rearing lambs. The early results suggest that maintaining young ewes as a separate group from tupping through to weaning increases lamb survival and ewe performance. One of the farms involved has shown a benefit of feeding young ewes during early lactation with lower weight loss from lambing to weaning compared to other farms who didn't feed.

The need for Challenge Sheep was identified from a previous AHDB-funded project on validating sheep KPIs, which found that young ewes were responsible for a disproportionate number of light lambs (17kg or less) at eight weeks, which directly affects weaning weights. This suggested that more work was needed to optimise the management

of younger ewes and to understand the cost-benefit of interventions, such as supplementary feeding of younger ewes in lactation, artificially rearing multiple lambs or creep-feeding lambs.

The farms are recording reasons why the Challenge Sheep replacements are leaving the flocks, in terms of death and culling. Previous work has shown that around 11 per cent of replacements will leave the flock in their first year, so it will be interesting to see how the Challenge Sheep farms differ from this figure. The project will also investigate intervention options, with the aim of reducing the number that leave the flock prematurely, which should lower replacement costs.

AHDB has established a discussion group around each of the Challenge Sheep farms, which is being run by a local facilitator. The groups meet three times a year to discuss the results coming from the Challenge Sheep replacements plus relevant sheep production topics, such as worm control, body condition scores and grass and forage management.

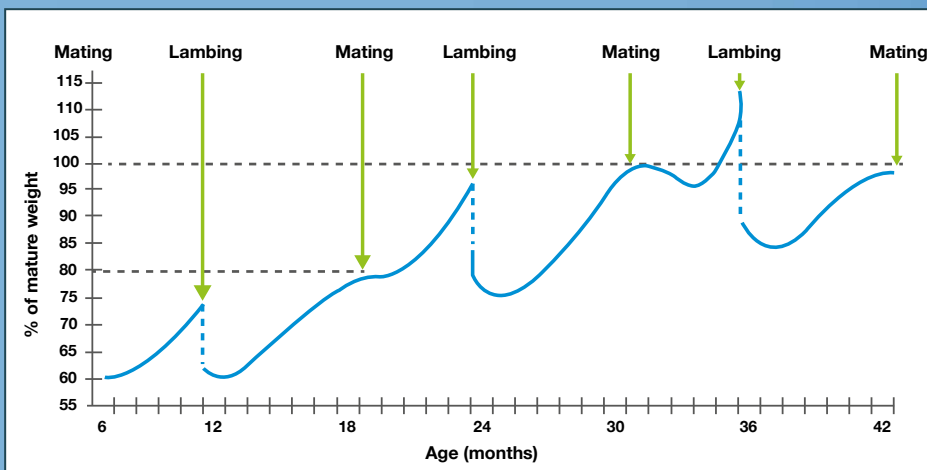


Figure 1. Liveweight change in mated ewe lambs over successive lambings (Feeding the ewe)

For more information on the Challenge Sheep project, visit:

[beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns/project-farms/challenge-sheep](https://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns/project-farms/challenge-sheep)



# The impact of 2018 season on silage production

The 2018 silage-making season is one that will remain in the memories of farmers, but this year for drought rather than waterlogging issues. The early first-cut analysis from major laboratories indicated good quality with relative high digestibility, metabolisable energy (ME) and crude protein. However, these silages are dominated by dairy farms.



Dave Davis,  
Director at Silage Solutions

The challenge for later first-cut silages from sheep and beef farms and second-cut silages is that of poorer yield and higher percentage dry matter (DM), alongside the likelihood of higher-fibre silages with lower digestibility and protein content. Most sheep and beef farms utilise early grass growth by grazing and this year it is probable that most sheep and beef farms were already in 'drought' conditions by the onset of silage making.

As drought takes hold, the plant in the field quickly moves from vegetative growth to seed formation and this results in a significant drop in feed value with poorer digestibility. This switch has two other important implications. The standing crop begins to dry out before harvest, which increases percentage DM. It's also more susceptible to fungal infection in the field. Together, these two factors are likely to result in higher-percentage DM silage in the clamp, with poorer compaction and a greater risk of aerobic spoilage at feed out.

At feed out this year, it is more important than ever to try and match feeding rate to animal numbers and to remove the clamp face after no more than three days. To do

this, it may be necessary to take half-depth shear-grab cuts rather than full-depth cuts to increase daily removal rate.

It is important to maintain a clean clamp face and a tight top sheet along the face, with gravel bags stopping air ingress between the sheet and the silage.

If high-quality silage is in short supply, then it is even more important to allocate this silage to high-producing animals such as pregnant ewes, milking sucklers or beef finishing cattle. Keep the poorer-quality forage for dry cows and young stock. To do this, it is important to analyse different batches of silage to help in the decision-making process.

You can find out how to analyse silage quality by reading BRP manual 'Making grass silage for Better Returns' at [beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns](http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns)

You can also use our feed and forage calculator to ensure you're making the most out of your conserved forage when stocks are low at [ahdb.org.uk/drought-feed-and-fodder](http://ahdb.org.uk/drought-feed-and-fodder)



**FARMERS**  
WEEKLY

## SOILS IN PRACTICE



### Best practice boosting soil fertility

8 NOVEMBER 2018 | EUSTON ESTATES, SUFFOLK

Soil is an absolutely fundamental consideration for every farmer. Attend Soils in Practice 2018 to learn from experts on the topics of measuring a 'healthy soil', compaction, soil management techniques, cover crops, organic matter and much more.



To find out more and register visit: [fwi.co.uk/soilsinpractice](http://fwi.co.uk/soilsinpractice)

 Farmersweeklyuk  
 @farmersweekly  
#soilsinpractice18

Headline Sponsors

**HUTCHINSONS**  
Crop Production Specialists



Supporting Partner



Part of







## What's new in sheep scab?

**Sheep scab is a form of allergic dermatitis caused by the faeces of a scab mite and is recognised as one of the most important ectoparasitic diseases affecting sheep in the UK. While the life cycle of a sheep scab mite is only 14 days, it's possible for mites to live off sheep for up to 17 days. To reduce the spread, early diagnosis of the dermatitis is crucial for control, but this can often be hard as the mite is only just visible to the human eye and can often be misdiagnosed as lice.**

With no vaccine currently available to protect sheep from the scab mite, farmers can only treat scab by either using injectable anthelmintic or by sheep dip (OP). However, both treatment methods are now being looked at closely, as they are not proving effective in their treatment of the disease. Over recent months, there have been confirmed cases of resistance to the ML injectable. This is a problem as the same product is used to treat roundworm as well as scab and if farmers aren't aware that the product isn't working correctly, not only is there the potential for the spread to increase but the strain of resistant sheep scab will spread more easily around the country.

The alternative method is using a sheep dip, but farmers need a licence and a certificate of competence to use and dispose of OP dip. These permits have recently soared in price, making the treatment method less cost-effective for farm businesses. Another option available is to contract the work to mobile sheep dippers. It's important to realise that using OP dip-through showers and jettors is not approved use. The product doesn't get through the fleece and onto the skin or flush out mites that may be hiding, eg in the ears.

To help identify the mite earlier, tests have been developed and are now available to detect whether an animal has had exposure to a scab mite. Spread is normally caused through sheep-to-sheep contact or if a sheep comes in to contact with equipment that has been infected by the sheep scab mite. The latest enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) blood test



developed by the Moredun institute is specific to sheep scab, meaning it won't be confused by other ectoparasites such as lice.

The test detects antibodies by identifying certain proteins found in the sheep scab mite. Historically, it has only been possible to make a clinical diagnosis several months after infestation, but the ELISA test is able to detect scab mites very early, at only two weeks post-exposure. With methods of treatment currently under review, this test reduces the spread of scab, especially if used to identify sheep that have been exposed and are not currently showing clinical stages of infection.

AHDB will be trialling the use of the ELISA test at all RamCompare farms this year. Producers who would like more information about controlling sheep scab should read BRP manual '**Controlling external parasites for Better Returns**' available at [beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns](https://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns)



# Dosing accuracy benefits from weighing on a strategic farm

Farming in Middle Duntisbourne in Cirencester, David Barton is one of AHDB's strategic farmers and is reaping the benefits of installing weighing technology to help improve the efficiency and productivity of his beef enterprise.

With a 103ha farm, David currently farms 60 South Devon and Sussex x Saler cows with a small arable enterprise. Joining the project last year, David wanted to focus on collecting data that could help him to increase efficiency but ensure he was producing the best product possible to hit market specification. To do this, installing new technology on the farm to help with day-to-day practices was an area David was keen to explore.



"We've never weighed our cattle before we became a Strategic Farm as we had always managed without and the cost of buying and installing the equipment had been a barrier."

AHDB worked closely with Tru-Test to install weighing equipment on to each beef and lamb Strategic Farm by the end of 2017. Since then, David has taken on the practice of regular weighing and noticed the considerable changes this has made.

"I've been really surprised about the difference the equipment has made to our business. I'm now able to see how all the cattle are growing, which, when we've been faced with weather conditions like we've had this year, has been really useful to check if we're still hitting target growth rates. I'm also able to compare the weight and growth of the cattle against the cost of the feed to make sure it's cost-effective for my enterprise," explains David.

David supplies Dovecote Park, where the maximum supply weight is 380kg deadweight. With regular weighing, David is able to avoid penalties and ensure cattle don't go to slaughter overweight, as well as having the opportunity and control to reach the highest target weight.

"The weighing equipment has impacted on the health treatment of our cattle. We've now wormed all our cattle to the correct dose, instead of estimating as in previous years. By doing this, it's not only letting us monitor the cost of treatment, but we're reducing the risk of resistance to wormers on farm."

"We don't use a lot of antibiotics on the cattle, but, similar to the wormers, we now administer them based on weights. Antibiotic resistance is a huge challenge to the industry and this change has helped us to play our part in reducing our impact," says David.

Most medicine instructions state they should be given in a specific dose in relation to liveweight. It is more difficult to follow precise dosing instructions if weighing equipment is not available, but inaccurate dosing can lead to poor efficacy and antibiotic resistance, as well as reducing the duration of protection.

"Having this level of information has been a game changer and if I didn't have access to it now I'd find it really difficult. We've managed to tighten up our finishing weights and have a positive impact on our health practices, which, as an industry, is something we should all be focused on. I've now seen the value that investing in weighing equipment can bring to an enterprise and wish I'd installed it sooner."

To find out how you could reduce antibiotic use on your farm, view the BRP manual '**Using medicines for Better Returns**', available at [beefandlamb.org.uk/returns](http://beefandlamb.org.uk/returns)





## Progressive beef farmer highlights importance of understanding business costs

**Progressive beef farmer Andy Rumming has been benchmarking his family's farm in order to understand his cost of production and highlight areas of his beef enterprise that could be improved.**

With 85 suckler cows, two bulls and 110 calves, Andy's system is 100 per cent grass-based, breeding his own replacements. All calves are weaned at 10 to 11 months and retained or moved to his brother's farm for finishing or sold as heavy stores at between 18 months and two years of age. Andy also finishes six cattle per year for his own meat box scheme.

"We first started benchmarking when we joined the progressive beef group. It was a requirement of joining and gave me the extra push and support to start looking closer at our business costs," explains Andy.

The aim of the beef and sheep progressive groups is to help farmers to develop their technical and business skills. The groups encourage discussion about new ideas to motivate others to increase the efficiency and profitability of their own enterprise.

"I've discussed our figures with others and benchmarked ourselves against similar farms, with a particular focus on fertility and cattle productivity. Improvement within our own business has been the most important benefit of benchmarking.

"When we started using Farmbench, the report flagged up that we had high fixed costs and we knew we needed to do something about it. We are now looking at streamlining machinery costs and are now using contractors for silage. I'm also really keen to start looking at areas such as insurance to see if this could be brought down further. It's only when you see the figures in front of you that you realise that you need to make a change," explains Andy.

While benchmarking is not a new practice, Farmbench makes it easier for farmers to allocate 100 per cent of their fixed costs. The system currently offers data input for beef, lamb, potato and cereals enterprises, with dairy and sugar beet coming on board in November. Updates to the beef and lamb enterprise areas are being launched at the same

time, with forage enterprises segregated and modifications to data entry to make it simpler for farmers.

"Other farming sectors seem to understand their cost of production better and I always wonder why beef should be the odd one out. With uncertainties in the future around Brexit and the subsidy system, we need to know more than ever how we are actually performing so that we have a really solid basis to make decisions about the future."

Commenting on the workload that many farmers worry about when starting to benchmark, Andy says: "You have to invest time and you need to keep good, accurate records. I've learnt that if you make sure your bookkeeping or accounting package splits out your costs in fine detail into the right area month by month, then things are a lot easier. Spending the time to sit down and sort out the figures is as useful as the actual end results – the results invariably bring up a range of questions."

To find out how Farmbench could help you improve your farm business, visit: [ahdb.org.uk/farmbench](http://ahdb.org.uk/farmbench)







## Boosting lamb image for midweek meals

**Traditionally there is a peak in lamb consumption at Easter. To encourage a break with tradition, AHDB marketing campaigns are urging consumers to get lamb on to their plates all year round as a versatile, healthy and sustainable product.**

The fourth Love Lamb Week, held in September, was an industry-wide initiative involving the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), the National Sheep Association (NSA), the National Farmers' Union (NFU), Red Tractor, Hybu Cig Cymru - Meat Promotion Wales (HCC), the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) and Quality Meat Scotland (QMS).

Young British sheep farmers were involved within the campaign, as many young consumers are motivated to purchase products that match their ethical views. Campaign messages were pushed out through a variety of marketing channels, with the messages centring around the seasonality and sustainability of lamb production.

The aim was to encourage an uplift in sales of lamb and to inspire change across consumers' perception of lamb. Success of the campaign will be measured against sales data, which will be available later in the year, along with a change in consumer attitudes, showing lamb to be considered as a midweek meal rather than as an occasional Sunday roast.

As well as Love Lamb Week, the EU-funded three-year marketing campaign to promote lamb within domestic markets has been launched with AHDB in England, Interbev in France and Bord Bia in Ireland. The 'Try it, love it' campaign, aimed at 25–35 year-olds, will promote messages around the nutritional and sustainable benefits of lamb.

The campaign will focus on specific lamb cuts such as lamb leg steaks, diced and mince, as they are ideal for midweek meal occasions due to speed and ease of cooking. At the end of summer, the campaign went on the road and had a stand at Dorset music festival, Bestival. Over 16,000 samples of recipes that used lamb leg steaks and lamb mince were given out to consumers to promote the alternatives to traditional midweek meats such as chicken.

A full campaign evaluation will take place at the end of the three years, but there will also be annual analysis of the sales figures to monitor influence.

Keep an eye on [beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/marketing](https://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/marketing) for more details of the campaign or follow **Simplybeefandlamb** on Instagram and Facebook to see what activity is coming up.



# News from across AHDB

## New Autumn Calving Index

AHDB Dairy's new Autumn Calving Index (€ACI) has launched, helping producers breed cattle better-suited to autumn block calving systems. €ACI acknowledges the feeding costs for winter milk production and higher milk prices per litre received, creating bespoke breeding decisions for farmers. AHDB's calving pattern focus is integral to the Optimal Dairy Systems programme, helping farmers to save money.

[dairy.ahdb.org.uk](http://dairy.ahdb.org.uk)

## First robotics and automation conference

AHDB's SmartHort conference, in March 2019, will share developments in robotics and automation that could change the way we grow, harvest and pack. This is an opportunity to discover the latest high-tech advancements, meet the people behind the innovations and find out how to invest in the technology that could make a positive impact on your business.

[horticulture.ahdb.org.uk](http://horticulture.ahdb.org.uk)

## Livestock in arable rotation

AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds has published a guide to inspire arable farmers to work with livestock farmers for mutual benefit. The guide covers the extensive opportunities available, including the grazing of arable land, growing crops for silage or hay and arranging muck-for-straw deals.

[cereals.ahdb.org.uk/livestock](http://cereals.ahdb.org.uk/livestock)

## 'Next Generation' programme

Future leaders of the potato industry are currently at the midway point in AHDB Potatoes 'Next Generation' programme. Now in its third year, the programme includes business and technical sessions, as well as supply chain visits. The aim is to develop the future leaders of the industry and give them exposure to the wider supply chain. Recruitment for 2019 will be announced soon.

[potatoes.ahdb.org.uk/next-generation](http://potatoes.ahdb.org.uk/next-generation)

## Updates to Pig Health Scheme

The scheme is an early-warning system for pig producers, informing them of key subclinical diseases, free of charge. It provides a way to improve herd health and reduce dips in performance that sometimes seem to have no cause.

[pork.ahdb.org.uk](http://pork.ahdb.org.uk)

## Useful resources

AHDB Beef & Lamb produces a range of practical guides to help English beef and sheep producers improve the productivity and competitiveness of their enterprises.

Here's an overview of some of the resources that have been recently updated:

### Buying a terminal ram and buying a maternal ram for Better Returns

There has been a rise in sheep farmers, both pedigree and commercial, using tools including EBVs and taking traits such as growth rates and carcass conformation into consideration when buying rams. The resulting genetic improvement is estimated to be worth £10.7 million per annum to the British sheep sector.

These manuals replace AHDB's previous 'Buying a recorded ram for Better returns'.

### Optimising sheep systems for Better Returns

It is important to ensure that your sheep system is appropriate for the resources you have available to optimise productivity and maximise profitability. Achieving this could mean you have more time to spend off the farm or doing something else on the farm.

This manual looks at a variety of systems and gives farmers options to consider when designing a system to suit their needs.



### Beef & Lamb TV

Our YouTube channel offers a wealth of video content for farmers. From useful how-to videos and seasonal hints and topics, to the latest industry information, this channel is the go-to place for beef and sheep producers.

Recently we have launched a liver fluke animated video in conjunction with Moredun Research Institute to promote understanding of the disease and help producers to develop effective control methods.

[youtube.com/ahdbbeefandlamb](http://youtube.com/ahdbbeefandlamb)

### Webinars

Webinars are an online meeting or presentation that you can join from the comfort of your own home through a laptop or tablet. We host a range of webinars each month, normally in the evening. You can sign up to our webinars on the events page.

[ahdb.org.uk/events](http://ahdb.org.uk/events)

These publications and more can be downloaded from [beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns](http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns) or call 024 7647 8834 for a copy.

### 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 [beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk](http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk)

@AHDB\_BeefLamb

If you no longer wish to receive this information, please email us on [comms@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:comms@ahdb.org.uk)

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 2018.  
All rights reserved.

**AHDB**