Sheep Health and Welfare Conference 2013

The real cost of endemic disease – The need to act!

Phil Stocker, NSA Chief Executive
The real cost of endemic disease

SHAWG conference
November 2012
Why endemic disease?

• Endemic diseases present ‘known risks’ – largely speaking we know what we are dealing with

• Endemic diseases are mainly the responsibility of the farm/farm business

• The other category – the ‘exotics’ - have different solutions and an increased level of shared Govt/industry responsibility
Some costs are visible

- Mortality, visibly poor condition, vet bills, staff time, and medicines
Some costs less visible

• Fertility reductions
• Reduced growth rates
• Increased feed costs
• Low output per hectare
• Carcass and product damage
• ‘Amplification ’ through other health problems
• Public support
BSAS – 2005 - Costs of the major endemic diseases of sheep..

Intestinal parasites est. ann. cost £84M
Footrot est. ann. cost £24M
Sheep scab est. ann. cost £8M

Estimates of £32M for abortions
SAC – 2005 - Costs and Benefits of Preventing Animal Diseases

• UK busy eradicating F&M and BSE while others have concentrated on diseases still endemic in UK

• Major food producing nations taking initiatives on endemic disease that could render UK uncompetitive and threaten trade

• UK sheep farmers slow to adopt disease prevention strategies – less responsive of the benefits of biosecurity than monogastric farmers
Production impacts – an informed guess

• Internal parasites (15% inefficiency?)
• Lameness (5% inefficiency?)
• Abortions (3 – 5 % losses?)
• Lamb mortality (15% losses?)
• Nutritional, and metabolic diseases (20% inefficiency?)
• MV and CLA ?
Most endemic diseases have solutions

- Plenty of genetic material, testing protocols, and recording
- We understand nutrition and grassland management, and we know of the benefits of good quality diets
- We know about the benefits of biosecurity and we know how to be biosecure
- For sheep coming on we know the risks, and there are accreditation schemes and testing protocols. We can quarantine and quarantine treat
- For many diseases there are effective preventative treatments and management solutions
- There are effective therapeutic medicines
But still no shortage of problems

Many of the health and disease issues facing sheep farmers are more a problem of:

• Knowledge transfer

• Application of knowledge

• Conflict between knowing what we should do and simply ‘getting on with things because we’re so busy’ – immediate vs. longer term thinking.
Healthy livestock, healthy environment

• Disease also results in resources being wasted – grass, concentrates, fuel, labour, medicines...

• UK climate change bill – 11% carbon reductions by 2020 – 80% by 2050

• In last decade sheep farming has evidence to show reduced emissions of 9.3% through production improvements and reduced N use
A solution fit for purpose

• Growing population and demand for food, resource constraints, climate change
• CAP budget risks less support for farmers and constantly moving towards demonstration of public goods
• Domestic animal health and welfare budget set for further cut backs
• An ‘Animal health scheme’ as part of Pillar 2
The Animal Health Scheme

• A points based scheme with a menu approach offering flexibility.

• Points for:
  – Health planning
  – Advisory visits by the vet
  – Involvement in voluntary monitoring and health schemes
  – Optional biosecurity measures
  – Employing quarantine procedures
So you’re asking for more money??

- UK CAP budget £3.1 B
- £2.5B currently Pillar 1 and £0.6B Pillar 2 (75% and 25% with Pillar 2 being match funded to £1.2B?)
- Pillar 2 about improving competitiveness, environment, and quality of life
- Enhancing animal health improves competitiveness, and reduces carbon footprint
- 14m breeding sheep @ £10/hd = £140m (12% of current budget) - but an appropriate shift of payments given the changing political drivers
Words of wisdom from this wise sheep

The mind is like a parachute – it doesn’t work unless its open