

# PSGHS NEWS

Premium Sheep and Goat Health Schemes

2020 Issue



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Welcome to the 2020 edition of PSGHS News – we apologise that this issue is late, we hope to be back to our regular schedule in 2021. We have also made the decision to release this as a digital only issue, meaning there will not be any printed copies available. It goes without saying that this year has not gone to plan. Amongst all of the confusion and interruptions to our day to day lives we have done what we can in order to meet the challenges that we have faced in terms of keeping the accreditation schemes running. With all of our shows and events for the year having been cancelled, we have very much missed the chance to meet with many of our members – hopefully we will be able to do so again in 2021. We hope you enjoy this newsletter; as well as an update on the MV and CAE schemes there is information on our new monitoring schemes, an overview of other iceberg diseases, a profile on one of our scheme members, an interview with an inspector and more!

## Maedi Visna and Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis Test Headlines

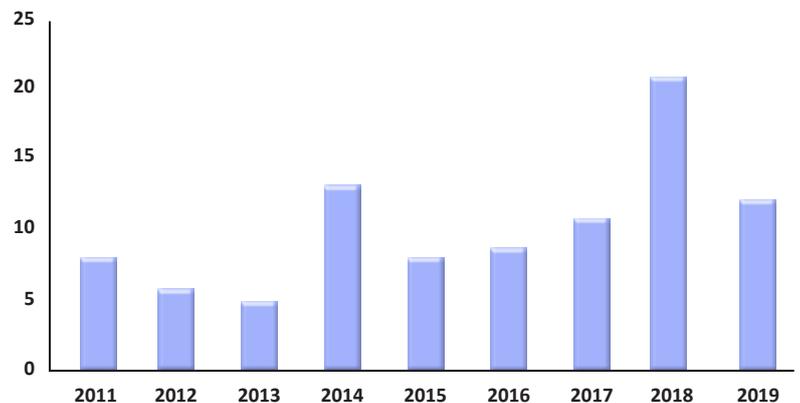
The MV/CAE accreditation scheme continues to provide protection and assurance to our members across the UK. SRUC's recent lab testing data shows some interesting trends and statistics. In 2019, 85% of all members were fully accredited (3070 MV and 176 CAE) with the remaining 15% of membership either qualifying or working to regain accreditation.

### Routine Periodic Blood Test Results

It is reassuring to note that in 2019 there were just 12 flock breakdowns, representing less than 0.4% of scheme members, and 1% of the 1248 Routine Periodic Blood Tests (RPBTs) performed during the year.

Seven of the 12 breakdowns were due to a single animal. Equally encouraging for goats with zero positives from 62 RPBTs. However, members should still be on their guard as despite a reduction in breakdowns as compared with 2018 (21 breakdowns) there is still a small upwards trend in the number of breakdowns over the years as shown in the graph:

MV Breakdowns



## 12 Animal Non-Accredited Flock Screen

In accordance with the new rules introduced at the beginning of 2019, all members with non-accredited sheep or goats on the same holding as their accredited flock/herd must do a non-accredited 12 animal screening test. 253 sheep and 2 goat screening tests were conducted and 23 (9%) of the non-accredited sheep flocks and one goat herd were identified as positive for MV/CAE.

Any members positive MV/CAE animals in their non-accredited flock/herd will need to test annually even if they had been on a two-yearly testing regime before. The screening tests have picked out potential risks in these flocks/herds and increased the owner's awareness, emphasising the importance for proper control and biosecurity between accredited and non-accredited animals.



## Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma (OPA) or Jaagsiekte

### How does this disease impact the flock?

This virus causes tumours to form in the lungs. Typically, these cause a build-up of fluid in the lungs, and affected sheep hang back when gathered. The lung damage makes them very prone to pneumonia and they may be found dead while still in good body condition. Other cases may have been treated with antibiotics for suspected pneumonia, but fail to respond and go on to die. Affected sheep, that don't die from pneumonia, lose weight and can be very thin at the time of death.

### How is the virus spread?

The virus is present in discharges from the nose and is easily spread from infected ewes to their lambs soon after birth. Trough feeding and housing also allow transmission between sheep, with all ages at risk. The virus may survive in the environment for a few weeks. OPA is most commonly introduced through the purchase of infected, but apparently healthy, sheep.

### How to find out if your flock has OPA

No blood test is available for this disease. Post-mortem investigation of cases of sudden death and ill thrift is a practical way to establish whether or not OPA is present in a flock. Ultrasound scanning of the lungs to detect OPA is being carried out more often, particularly on purchased stock. This will provide some information, but early stage tumours may be too small to detect.

### Reducing Disease Risk

Reducing stocking densities and the period of time when sheep are housed or trough fed may reduce virus spread. Where lambs born to ewes with OPA can be identified they should not be kept as breeding replacements.



©bushhousevetgroup



# New Sheep Monitoring Schemes Aim to Reduce Risk of Disease



**Two new monitoring schemes have been launched to sit alongside the Premium Sheep and Goat Health Schemes (PSGHS) accreditation.**

While PSGHS Accreditation is the gold standard, the monitoring schemes provide a level of assurance for buyers looking to reduce disease risk. PSGHS Monitoring Schemes cover maedi visna (MV) and Johne's disease.

It is hoped that 'monitoring' will appeal to a broader base of flock owners – those wishing to minimise the impact of disease in their flocks but who are unable to meet the requirements of PSGHS accreditation. Monitoring is based on annual testing of three main groups for each separately managed flock:

- Targeted testing of high-risk adult animals – either 12 or 20 depending on the size of flock (above or below 500)
- Testing of rams
- Testing a proportion of added animals where they have lower health status, as these pose the greatest risk in introducing disease



Testing can be done at any time of year but SRUC asks members to allow six weeks before animals are sold to give plenty of time for arranging sampling, testing, and reporting. The farm's private veterinary surgeon must take the samples.

SRUC Veterinary Services decided on a targeted testing approach, as opposed to testing a random sample, following years of experience detecting disease using '12 ewe screens' which are regularly used by many commercial flocks.

The PSGHS MV Accreditation Scheme also successfully uses 12 ewe screens in non-accredited commercial flocks run by MV accredited members. Targeting of the animals to test is based on selection by the flock's veterinary surgeon, from those that are thinner or have raised poor lambs/had a poor milk yield, with no other apparent reason on examination (such as lameness or dental disease). This

means that fewer animals need to be tested compared to a test based on a random selection of animals.

Another important part of membership is an annual appraisal of farm biosecurity, working through a biosecurity guidance checklist with the farm vet. The Health Status Report for a monitored flock will be awarded annually and will record the number of years that a flock has been monitored.

SRUC's Dave Wilson, PSGHS Veterinary Manager, said: "We hope that this new scheme will appeal particularly to commercial producers of female breeding stock who want to reassure buyers that they take these diseases seriously, and are working hard to reduce the risk of spreading disease."

Phil Stocker, Chief Executive of the National Sheep Association (NSA), said: "NSA plays an active role on the PSGHS Advisory Board and these schemes are something we have definitely encouraged. It is very timely given the growing interest in iceberg diseases and is a great opportunity for commercial sheep farmers to get involved as a method of reducing losses and inefficiencies."

Carolyn Gill, who keeps a flock of Shetland Sheep in Dorset with her husband David, is the first member of the new scheme.

She said: "We are very proud and pleased that our Shetland flock is the first member in the UK of SRUC's monitoring scheme. We wanted to have recognised health monitoring at a level appropriate for our flock, and the new scheme is a perfect solution by giving us greater confidence in – and awareness of – our sheep's health."

In instances where disease is found, the farmer can take a proactive approach to manage the disease with their vet, benefiting from the discounted test prices available to members.

To find out more, visit [www.sheepandgoathealth.co.uk](http://www.sheepandgoathealth.co.uk), email [psghs@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:psghs@sruc.ac.uk) or visit the online brochure.

# Ovine Johne's Disease Diagnoses 2005 to 2019

SRUC Veterinary Services recorded 837 diagnoses of Johne's disease in sheep between 2005 and 2019, with wasting being the most common symptom. The condition was confirmed in 37 different breeds, as well as 8 cross breeds.

The number of diagnoses fluctuate throughout the year, with few in the summer months. Peaks in February and September are associated with the investigation of thin ewes that are barren at scanning, and thin ewes that fail to gain condition after weaning. Ewes entering the later stages of pregnancy, as well as seasonal feed shortages, may contribute

to the higher number of diagnoses in late winter. The graphs below summarise Johne's disease diagnoses by age and sex for hill and lowland breeds; illustrating that it should be considered as a cause of ill-thrift in all ages of ewes and tups.

50.5 percent of diagnoses were based on blood testing, 34 percent on examination of carcasses, and 14.4 percent following examination of faecal samples. Cases of Johne's disease can be classified as multi-bacillary or pauci-bacillary based on the number of Johne's disease bacteria within the intestinal wall.

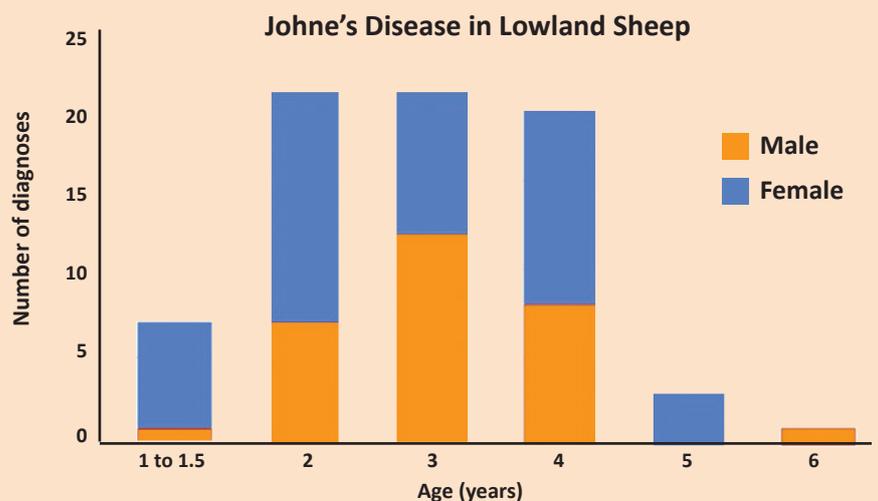
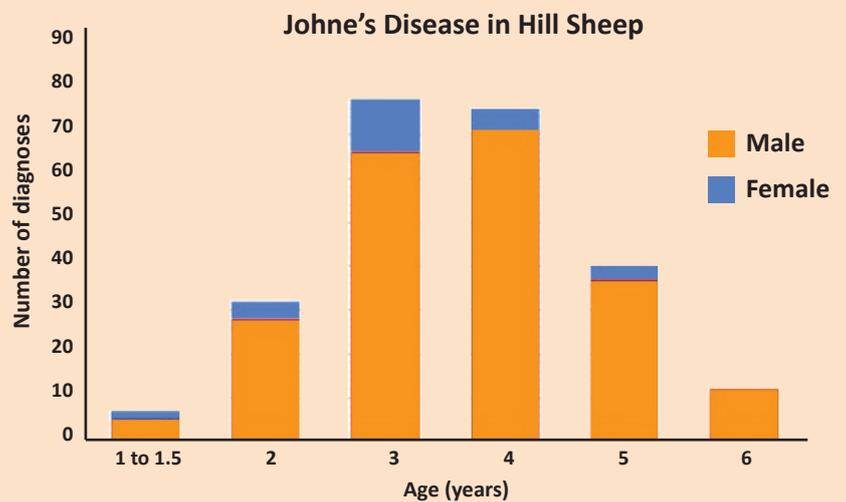
Multi-bacillary cases are associated with large numbers of bacteria and are more likely to test positive on both faecal examination and blood tests than pauci-bacillary cases. They may also cause yellow/orange pigmentation of the intestines which is visible on post-mortem examination.

The detection of pigmented strains (multi-bacillary) varies by region, and knowledge of the most common strain type occurring on a farm, or within a local area, can help guide the selection of diagnostic tests. Pigmented strains of Johne's disease are considered to be sheep-associated, with a lower likelihood of infecting cattle. They are therefore of less risk to the health status of cattle utilising the same grazing.

*Heather Stevenson (SRUC Veterinary Investigation Officer, Dumfries Surveillance Centre)*



Pigmented Johne's disease



# Interview with Neil Wright – Farm Inspector

PSGHS Inspectors have an important role to play in safeguarding the high health status of our members' flocks. We select around 50 events and 80 farms each year for inspection in Scotland, England and Wales. We interviewed Neil Wright, one of the PSGHS inspectors with the longest track record in the business!

## Neil how long have you been an Inspector?

I have been carrying out inspections for 18 years including Red Tractor Inspections as well as PSGHS.

## Which area of the country do you operate in?

Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Wales.

## What do you do on a typical farm inspection visit?

I check that the MV/CAE accreditation scheme's biosecurity rules are being followed and accredited sheep/goats are kept completely separate from lower health status sheep/goats. I notice if staff are wearing clean clothes to prevent disease contamination. I check farm boundaries and fencing and the 2m rule (3m for goats). I also check that MV/CAE accredited animals are lambed separately from any non-accredited stock and that they are not using the same airspace or equipment/colostrum etc. I ask what policy the member has for disinfecting handling/transport facilities. I ask to see the lambing/pedigree or medicine records. I ask about shared rams/ bucks and check to see if the farm has suitable isolation facilities for any added animals.

## What duties do you carry out at Shows and Sales?

I first make myself known to the appropriate person/organiser. I make sure that health status reports are

checked prior to animals being unloaded. I check that there are clear signs showing separation for non MV accredited and MV accredited stock. I check procedures in judging rings and stock routes and that appropriate measures for disinfection and separation are set up at sales holding accredited stock.

It is nice to visit small village shows run by volunteers and interesting to compare set ups with the larger national shows. You never know who you are going to bump into each year. While carrying out my official duties I saw Princess Anne at the Three Counties, David Cameron at the Royal Welsh and Boris Johnson at the Welsh Winter Fair!

## What do you like about the job?

I meet a lot of very nice people from a range of farm types. I met a lady recently who only had a small flock of her own but is also employed helping others with lambing and preparing sheep for showing – she lives the job!

I enjoy discussing stock with members – what ram they have bought etc. while I appreciate the significance of figures and growth rates I think that longevity is important as a good ram in my opinion should last for a good few years.

The perks of the job are the hospitality I receive in the form of tea and cake. Pre-Christmas visits are particularly rewarding!

## Neil's Top Tip for Inspections

I always keep a pair of clean wellies in the car plus some disinfectant!



## Focus on

- There are 207 registered PSGHS members with goats and 75 of these also keep MV accredited sheep
- The total number of goats in PSGHS is around 17,500
- The majority of members have small herds, although 12 members farm herds with over one hundred animals, with 5 of these members having herds of over 1000
- There are around 15 breeds registered on our database including meat, milk and wool/hair breeds.

Country	Number of Members	Percentage of Membership	Number of Goats per Herd	Number of Herds
England	160	77%	Less than 10	104
Scotland	29	14%	Between 10 & 50	65
Wales	18	9%	More than 50	22

**Please don't forget that MV/CAE is the same disease for management and biosecurity. Don't forget your pet goats when you test the sheep flock!**



## David Milne

Longcroft Farm,  
Insch,  
Aberdeenshire



**Having grown up on an arable and pig farm, it wasn't until four years ago that David made the decision to start his flock of pedigree Hampshire Downs. Reflecting on his past David says, "I enjoyed the arable side, the mechanisation and even did contracting for a bit. But I could never interest myself in the pigs." Not wanting to miss out on the livestock experience altogether, the decision was made four years ago to start keeping sheep.**

Looking back on this decision David explained his reasons for choosing the Hampshire Down breed: "Having decided to start a flock, I was keen to get into a British native breed. I looked at the Suffolk, but also looked at others that had commercial potential, and was going to make my mind up between the Hampshire or the Ryeland. On the Saturday afternoon of the Royal Highland Show in 2015 a breeder caught me again looking at his stock (after I'd had a good lunch and a couple of glasses...) with the remark, 'Well Mr Milne are you going to keep kicking the tyres, or drive the car?' 'Drive the car', was my reply, so that was the die cast. We went to see the breed on show at the Great Yorkshire Show in July of that year and took it from there – buying two in-lamb ewe lambs and two gimmers."

David now runs a flock of 44 Hampshires in total, so far selling finished male lambs and keeping ewe lambs back to grow the flock, as well as a couple of ram lambs that will soon be ready to sell on for breeding. David adds, "Our flock is synchronised and lamb in the week running up to Christmas. As a down's breed they could lamb twice a year, although I have not found anyone with experience of doing this."



As his first purchases were from an MV accredited flock, David was keen to keep the accredited status and joined the health scheme straight away. Moving forward tupps have been sourced from the breed sales at Stirling, including the 2nd prize winning ram lamb in May 2019, selling for 500gns David has also turned his hand to showing, first entering the Banchory show three years ago, commenting that, "farmers liked our animals but our preparation for show left a lot to be desired..." However, in 2018, with some help with some help in the dressing of the sheep, David won a minor rosette at Turriff show, before winning a first and a second at last year's show.



When asked about his goals for his flock, David answers: "It's all about learning while I can. I have worked in industries other than farming, machinery manufacture, deep sea diving and instrument calibration. I treat every day as a school day and I'm keen to learn. Longer term I would like to get better and more knowledgeable in sheep keeping and hopefully sell on to others who could take an interest in the breed, which I think is somewhat overlooked in our area, although we had a fair bit of interest in our sheep from onlookers at Turriff last year."

David's passion for learning has also led him to recently enrol in SRUC's Genomics for Animal Breeding course. "I would encourage anyone with an interest in animal breeding to do it – if you are interested and can find time to watch TV in an evening, you can do this instead!" The desire to learn runs in the family, as David's daughter, Georgie, is currently studying for a degree in Rural Business Management at SRUC, while working part time on quality assurance at a local feed company and helping/learning with the sheep at home, but hoping to follow a career in land agency once graduated.

David's final comments were of thanks to those who have helped him on his journey into keeping Sheep. "Thanks to our local vets, our neighbours who are also PSGHS members and SRUC, all of who have been hugely helpful. Help is there if you ask for it – never be scared to ask!"

# Notice Board

## MV & CAE New Rule Reminder

At the start of 2019 new rules were introduced to the MV and CAE schemes that were fully explained in last year's newsletter. You can read the full version of the rules on our website.

- **Rule 2.5.2** - If accredited and non-accredited animals are kept on the same holding, a screen of 12 non-accredited animals must be performed at the time of every Routine Periodic Blood Test

- **Rule 4.1.2** - All MV/CAE accredited animals added to an MV/CAE accredited flock/herd must be tested between 6 and 12 months after arrival

- **Rule 4.1.3 & 4.1.4** - Imported animals, semen and embryos that are accredited under a non-UK scheme must be kept isolated or not used/implanted until authorisation is given by the PSGHS vet to add them to an accredited flock.

## Scrapie Reminder

It is important to use the correct paperwork when sending in heads for testing. Any previous forms used for scrapie surveillance are not applicable. If incorrect forms are used, we will not receive your results and it can be very difficult or impossible to track them down. The form to be used can be downloaded at [www.bit.ly/scrapieform](http://www.bit.ly/scrapieform).

## Certification of Purchased Animals

When purchasing accredited animals, members should make sure that they request a copy of the seller's accreditation certificate. Then when testing these animals on your holding 6 to 12 months later, a copy of the certificate should be sent to SRUC along with the blood samples.



**George Caldwell**

Head of Veterinary Services  
BVM&S, MSc, CertCHP,  
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**Heather Stevenson**

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# Meet the Team



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