



## Welfare in Extensive Flocks

### Background

- Welfare in extensive flocks is crucial point
- There are ways of improving welfare and economics
- Extreme conditions, large flocks, few contact with shepherds
- Important to get prevention and costs right
- Will be more and more important for farmer (legislation, CAP, assurance scheme, etc.)

### Research at SAC:

Committed to animal welfare and economic sustainability in extensive and extreme conditions

### Present Research is focused on:

- Improving welfare and farm profit in extensive flocks, identifying management strategies to get a win/win situation.

We found that winter feeding and animal health strategies were important, as well as the strategy of housing some of the ewes at lambing time. Labour was found to be crucial and needed future careful management.

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- Measuring animal welfare in a way that is scientifically valid but usable by farmers in extensive systems.

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- Animal behaviour & welfare - characteristics of neonatal lambs leading to improved lamb survival.

Lamb mortality in the UK is currently 15% and is a concern both from an economics and welfare point of view. The first few days after birth are crucial. We found that lambs that are quick to stand and suck after birth have better survival. Lamb behaviours are influenced by genetics and behaviours are correlated with lamb rectal temperatures, a quick and easy measure.

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- Off-wintering systems integrated with native woodland. Research found that away wintering is beneficial for hill sheep welfare, with less ewe and lamb mortality, better ewe weight gain and condition, increased litter size and better total lamb weaning weight. Grazing in woodland is also forecast to increase welfare (shelter) and sustainability.

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