

CEO Update March 2025

Starting off a new year...

As I closed out my last update, I wished you all a successful lambing and as we are working through the outcome some have not been so fortunate and have been badly affected by Schmallerberg Virus.

A well-publicised case whose lambing was severely hampered, Helen, Robert and Michael Goldie at Harpercroft have been

particularly badly affected. Hats off to them they have used their circumstance to learn as much out about the disease in a move to help others understand it more and pass on their findings.

As we, and you limber up and get in training for the busy summer season in 2025 there is a spectre on the horizon casting a shadow over our activities to promote over the summer months at the usual shop window of the Shows and sales. We are keeping a very close eye on the situation with the devolved governments having different views of Blue Tongue virus and how that may affect animal movements. The two diseases are completely out of our control and each farm and vets practice can offer advice on the way to go to mitigate any effect on their flocks that an outbreak may be prevented. It seems that there is no general rule to follow but work closely with your own vet for the best options for your individual circumstances.

Finance Committee

We continue our focus on the finances of the Society and Iain Barbour (Solwaybank) has taken on the role as Chair of the committee. Our task this year is to control spending and explore avenues to extend our income. Last year, numbers came in with a surplus as you can see by the accounts that you all have had. We are focussing on repeating last years financial performance with a view to making some plans to invest into some projects that we will be developing over this financial year and starting in financial year 2025/26. We will keep you posted as always through these updates on the progress that we make with this to make your membership of the Society a valued asset to your business.

Council Update

Council met on March 13th followed by the AGM which all happened in Edinburgh this year. And following the normal start of meeting formalities the following items of note were discussed. Both Finance and Schmallerberg were on the agenda which are covered up above. Blue tongue virus is another blot on the landscape and the Foot and Mouth outbreak on the near continent is of grave concern. Please be assured that we are keeping very close to the outcomes of any decisions that are made by the authorities and will be offering the best advice we have for you to cope with the outcomes of decisions that may affect our and your activities.

1886 Heritage Suffolk

1886 Heritage Suffolk Lamb was discussed with the outcome that we should focus on marketing the "Suffolk Advantage" as the way forward. Council have asked the CEO to develop a marketing plan around ways to get the message out there and present this to the next council meeting for review. As this develops we may have to convene a small meeting to discuss this, as the next council meeting is in mid May and we may lose opportunities at the Sheep Events to promote the principle.

Genomics Project

The Genomics project carries on in conjunction with AHDB and affiliate organisations to see just how far we can take this. Its moved leaps and bounds in the last quarter with the advent of Genomic breeding evaluations being published. Valuable work towards an extra tool with extra accuracy for the selection of elite performing animals. Signets Sam Boone put a video presentation together to update council on the progress and outlined the potential of this valuable research and data analysis.

NSA events for 2025

The sales for 2025 are all starting to loom on the horizon as previously mentioned there may be many things that will affect the shows and sales this year that are out of our control. We just must continue to plan as normal and react at what may possibly be short notice if the circumstance change. The Northern Counties Branch sale is being changed slightly this year into a two-day event on Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd of August. The Show will be on Friday evening with refreshments and bar being available throughout the show, with the sale commencing on Saturday morning. This change has been made in conjunction with H&H to make it more of an occasion and reflects the resurgence of the Suffolk breed in the industry as we gain momentum in our quest to return to our former glory!

As was the case in 2024, the Society would like to recommend to breeders that they avail themselves of the facility to sire verify their male entries prior to sales by nasal swab test, no need for a vet, and we will also report the ARR/ARR status. This is a voluntary process not mandatory, and it is up to the individual to choose to test if there is any uncertainty to the sire of a lamb. The Society does not take any responsibility for the correctness of the test, and there will be no change to the requirements for a DNA sample to be accompanied by a ram proforma when registering any ram.

Yearbook 2025

You should all now have the yearbook now and we hope you like the style and the content. Thanks to Gill Farmer in the office who has been the lead on this for our 2025 edition for her efforts in relentlessly chasing for content. This is an all-consuming task in December and January, and I thank her and the wider office staff for this support with the publication. Your pack also contains the booklet that we have produced. I have previously billed this as a sales toolkit for you all to follow. It's the basis of the "Suffolk Advantage" that we have developed.

USSSB

We have been working with the United States Suffolk Sheep Breeders association on a study tour over here in the UK. The party of 30 is coming across in June during the Royal Highland Show week. Based in the Borders area, several visits have been agreed to farms in the area. Council agreed that we should support the trip by contributing towards some of the events that we are staging during their time with us. They will be joining the Suffolk Breeders on the Thursday of the Highland show for the after-show refreshments on the sheep lines, and the chance to discuss all things Suffolk at both sides of the pond.

Stratified Sheep Group

The Stratified Sheep Group continues to gather pace. Council have agreed that we should continue to be a part of the Native British Breed Society's initiative with aims in mind that will be

a benefit to us. There are further Societies that are expressing an interest in the aims of the group and the collective is growing! We are focussed on two main areas which work hand in hand with each other. Health issues affecting ultimate performance and leading to a lower carbon footprint. And a move to bring sequestration into a carbon footprint calculation that will give a Carbon footprint of the System.

Online Platform Reports

There was a point raised about a delay in a female sale report being published on our online platforms. In this case, it was in fact due to a delay in the report being sent to us. This is a good time to remind everyone that we can only put news out there if we have it.

Society Sales, Shows and events attended by the CEO or representative can be updated on social media in real time and we aim to publish the reports as soon as is practically. For non Society sales or events, we rely on organisers providing us with the information, only then can it be published. This is also the case for Branch & Club events or celebrations!

We are continuing to look at how to make improvements to this in 2025.

Exports

Export enquiries continue to come in and we are limited in what we can do within our geographical area. This is down to disease restrictions surrounding blue tongue virus, but this picture is rapidly changing and we will keep you informed of the changes that are made to any export restrictions being made.

Membership Update

It's encouraging to see that we are up on membership numbers over last year at the early stage of this financial year reflecting the renewed interest and the momentum that we are making as a breed, so we need to keep that momentum going. Keep an eye on our social media platforms for monthly updates on new members.

National Flock Competition 2025

Last year saw the Bristol Gold Cup travelling to Wales with DG Jones, Frongoy winning Overall Champion flock. Where will it go this year? National Flock Competition 2025 is ready to launch! Keep an eye on your emails and our online platforms for the entry form and conditions!

Birth Notification Deadline

Remember the deadline for 2025 Birth Notifications to be submitted is 31st May 2025. Either complete them online or by returning paperwork sent in February. All birth notified AI or ET lambs MUST be accompanied by certificates/receipts before they can be processed. Submissions made after the deadline will incur late fees.

We continue to work very hard as a team in the office and at Council to add value to you being a member of the Suffolk Sheep Society. We try and look at many ways to improve what we offer for your continued support. We have your best interests at the core of our thinking and what we instigate must benefit all concerned.

Barrie L Turner

CEO and Breed Secretary

