Annual General Meeting

13\textsuperscript{th} March 2013, held in the Roslin Institute Building, SRUC, Easter Bush, Midlothian, at 11.30 am

Present:
Sam Wharry, Campbell Tweed, Edward Adamson, Sandy Welsh, Ann Welsh, Barry Sangster, Ian Duncan Millar, Bobby Lennox, James Duncan Millar, George King, Mark Armstrong, Yvonne Jones, Pat McCambridge (CAFRE), Lutz Bunger (SRUC), Katie Keiley (SSS)

1. **Apologies**
Steven Johnston, Billy Brady, Neville Graham, Janet Beveridge, Ann McLaren (SRUC), George Schofield, Callum Burnett, Caroline and John Jeromson, Brian Kaye, Robyn Hulme

2. **Minutes of the last AGM 8\textsuperscript{th} March 2012 & Matters Arising**
The adoption of the minutes was proposed by Ian Duncan Millar, seconded by Campbell Tweed and were then signed by Acting Chairman Sam Wharry.

3. **Chairman’s Report**
Sam Wharry gave his report on the year:

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 1\textsuperscript{st} annual general meeting of the Maternal Sheep Group. Little did I think, when I bade you all a fond farewell as chairman last year, that I would be back again, but we don't always know what is ahead of us. I also didn't think, when I commented on the glorious weather we were having, that once it started to rain in April, it would keep it up for the next year. Nor did I think when I mentioned the superb prices for hoggets last year, that we would see such a disappointing trade all autumn and winter. The recent price rises have been very welcome, but considering the price of feed and the expense of keeping lambs till now I'm afraid that it is probably too little too late. It has definitely been a challenging year for both sheep and sheep farmers, and I think that times like these only serve to reinforce our belief in breeding sheep which can look after themselves and their lambs.

It has also been a year of change and challenges for the Maternal Sheep Group. As I'm sure you are all aware Janet Beveridge was elected chairman at the AGM last year, and we did not select a vice-chair. Unfortunately during the summer Janet felt unable to continue as chairman and asked to resign, the lack of a back up has meant that you have been lumbered with me again. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Janet for all her work and assistance to me over the three years when she was vice-chairman, and to hope that she will continue as a member of the group. With hindsight I think that not electing a vice-chair was a mistake. We are a diverse group geographically, and at a time of change, often working with people you may not know very well, I believe it is important that the office bearers get help and support, not only from the members, but also from the development group, and I think that in future we should have stated meetings of the development group at set intervals, something that no doubt we will discuss in the meeting this afternoon.

The development group met for the first time on the 29\textsuperscript{th} Aug at Shantron, when we enjoyed the hospitality of Bobby and Ann Lennox, many thanks to them, especially as Bobby was still suffering the after effects of a bad car accident, but was still able to show off his domestic prowess with an excellent lunch. At this meeting I was asked to act as interim chairman until the AGM. The full minutes of the meeting are available on the website, so I don't propose to go through them all again here.

The technical meeting was held on the 29\textsuperscript{th} November, and we were delighted to welcome 12 members and friends from Scotland to join with our Northern Ireland members. We are very grateful to Campbell for hosting an excellent and thought provoking farm walk in the morning, and in the afternoon we had a range of speakers including Alison Glasgow from Signet, Kathy Peebles from QMS, Alistair Carson from AFBI, George Megarry from TGM computing, and Eamon Wall, Stephen Potterton and Thierry Pabiou from Sheep Ireland. Again details are on the website, but I would just like to thank everyone who took part, and all of you who made the effort to travel over for the meeting. The format of getting together for a meal and a chance to socialise the night before worked well, and is something which I think we should consider again in the future.

The development group met again by teleconference on the 8\textsuperscript{th} February, primarily to arrange this meeting, but also to discuss some queries with Signet over tag formats. This subject is on the agenda for the afternoon meeting. You will be pleased to hear that is about all I have to say, except to thank all the members of the development group, and especially Yvonne as secretary, for all their work and input through what as I said has been a challenging year for the Maternal Sheep Group. We are in a time of change, but I think that all of us here appreciate the benefits we have
found from breeding sheep selected to do the job they are supposed to, and the benefits of discussing problems and opportunities with like minded individuals. For that reason if no other I would like to wish the Maternal Sheep Group every success in the coming years.

4. Treasurer’s Report
Ian Duncan Millar presented the Treasurer’s report for 2012:

The year started with the formation of the Maternal sheep group, as a combination of the Blackface Sire Reference Company and the Easycare breeders group. From a financial standpoint the most important decision was to continue the bank account and Company registration of the BFSRCo. This gave the new group sufficient funds from which to get started.

The development of a decent web site was the first initiative and to fully fund this the membership fees were sought and paid just prior to lambing, rather than in the tupping season of the year. The year remains the calendar year. The subscription income rose, by virtue of the additional easycare breeders and we now have 17 paid up members, two failed which I fully expect to rejoin / pay up. 16 are in the year, one just outside. Gross income is all subscriptions – comes to £2400. (£1775 in 2011).

The costs are virtually all in the promotion and secretarial costs. The web was 1150 & advertising 419. Secretarial services include two years to Yvonne, due to my slowness in telling Yvonne to submit a bill, which explains the overall loss of £1943 (cf a profit of £1232 in 2011), and almost balances out the surplus last year accrued from the same explanation. There was an agreement to fully fund the web site development in the year, knowing that it would lead to a slight overspend.

The other minor costs are accountancy, a carryover of a storage bill from Innovis that is now concluded, and a small VAT element.

The Balance sheet remains adequate, with a net worth of £4313, being all cash in the bank of £4319. Current balance is still £4319.

Looking ahead, there is some cash in reserve that could be used for promotion of one sort or another without any increase in subs this time, and on that basis I suggest fees are held at £150 per farm membership for the coming year and I will get these notices out before the main lambing period. If there is an ambition for a greater drive to put forward our members stock we may need to consider the corresponding revenue generation.

Can I conclude by thanking Yvonne for doing the detailed stuff on the web site and her support as secretary. I should perhaps mention Ellen at EMB Graphics, but more importantly you the members for making the treasurer’s job straightforward.

5. Election of office bearers
   i) Chairman. Sam Wharry proposed Campbell Tweed as Chairman, seconded by George King.
   ii) Vice-Chairman. Sam Wharry proposed Bobby Lennox as Vice-Chairman, seconded by Ian Duncan Millar.
   iii) Secretary. Yvonne Jones, proposed by Ann Welsh, seconded by James Duncan Millar.
   iv) Treasurer. Ian Duncan Millar, proposed by Campbell Tweed, seconded by Yvonne Jones
   v) Publicity/PR officer – a new position to promote the group. Barry Sangster, proposed by Campbell Tweed, seconded by Ian Duncan Millar
   vi) Two development group members. George King and Barry Sangster. Ann Welsh to stand in for Barry if he cannot get to the meetings.
   vii) Breed group admin assistants – these to stand in as secretary for concurrent meetings. Ann Welsh for the Easycare group, proposed by Campbell Tweed, seconded by Barry Sangster.

There ensued a short discussion about the development group. Sam Wharry, as past chairman, would not be joining it this year. It was decided that it should be a maximum of eight people for ease of discussions and decision making.

There may be a possibility of another member joining – Robyn Hulme is interested – and this would bring a third breed to the group. It would be Campbell’s decision, as Chairman, whether to co-opt him in on any of the development group meetings during the year, if he felt it was relevant.

6. Appointment of Auditors
Ian Duncan Millar proposed to reappoint Campbell Dallas as Auditors, and this was seconded by Sam Wharry.

7. Directors: review of current directors. (Five Directors whose term of office can be fewer than 8 years if they so wish).
Janet Beveridge was stepping down this year and, as it is traditional that the Chairman is a director, Sam Wharry proposed Campbell Tweed, seconded by Ann Welsh.
The other current directors remain in position:
8. AOCB
There has been interest from another group – Sheep Improved Genetics Ltd (SIG) – in joining the Maternal Sheep Group and Ian Duncan Millar asked how we should do this if they wanted to go ahead. It was decided that it may become complicated if they wanted to join as a group. Therefore, only individual membership would be allowed, as individual farm members, and they must be breeding sheep. It was considered useful if others did join the group.

9. Date of next AGM
This was agreed as Wednesday 12\textsuperscript{th} March 2014. The Venue is to be confirmed nearer the time.

The AGM closed at 12.10pm.
The AGM was followed by a General Meeting, starting at 1.00pm

1. Minutes of the General Meeting 8th March 2012 and Matters Arising
   The adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Sam Wharry and seconded by Sandy Welsh, and they were signed by Campbell Tweed.

2. Maternal Sheep Group update
   Comments about the first year of the Maternal Sheep Group had already been made in the Chairman’s and Treasurer’s speeches, and under AOCB in the AGM. There were no further comments.

3. Scottish Sheep Strategy Update – Katie Keiley
   Katie Keiley introduced herself and explained that she is one of two part-time people taken on as QMS SSS Development Officers. She is Development Officer for the South of Scotland and Stuart Annand is Development Officer for the North of Scotland, the Central Belt being the approximate dividing line. They are working part time with a two year contract. As well as having her own Consultancy/Management Accounts business, Katie is Secretary of the Border Leicester Sheep Breeders.
   Katie explained that the aims of the Scottish Sheep Strategy were
   - To encourage rapid uptake of breeding technology
   - To reduce production cost
   - To improve quality and consistency of Scotch lamb
   - Thereby increase demand for recorded breeding stock
   - Overall to INSPIRE A GENERATION of sheep producers to buy recorded stock as common practice – This is Katie’s job in particular.

   Considering a graph looking at the uptake of Sheep Breeding Technologies, she felt we were right at the start of the upward trend of the graph, past the 2.5% of Innovators (our group being the Innovators), and into the 13.5% Early Adopters. This is well short of the uptake in the beef breeders sector.

   Katie discussed her progress to date. She has spoken at SAC sheep focus meetings, engaged with the Young Farmers group, approached breed secretaries, written articles and is working to develop a sheep group in the South West. She has been concentrating more on the pedigree side and encouraging more farmers to performance record.

   So far, Stuart has been working more on the commercial side and has talked to Monitor Farm groups about flock improvement, engaged with an abattoir producer group, engaged with a large feed company regarding staff training on EBV’s and also written articles for the press.

   Both Katie and Stuart want to build on the flocks already recording, with established breeders, sheep groups and monitor farms, work with the trade in genetics and feed companies, and encourage consultants such as the SRUC. They will also be visiting events such as NSA Highland Sheep and NSA Sheep NI and getting involved in industry workshops on EBVs.

   Considering what we currently record e.g. maternal ability, litter size, mature size, and then asked what we thought we should be recording and what we could do to get farmers to take up recording or buy recorded stock.

   The group thought that recording EBVs for health traits, worm resistance, lamb survival and lamb vigour would be beneficial, and do want to see an increase in the total numbers of EBVs. However, this could appear too complicated as commercial buyers appear to prefer a simpler scoring system. Instead, some traits could be amalgamated eg as maternal traits. Longevity could decide the lifetime cost of a sheep, but scoring would have to be allowable for those flocks that sell ewes at four years old.

   On the negative side, human psychology meant that a customer would invariably buy a good looking tup with good confirmation, rather than buy one purely with good EBVs. Also, traits like litter size and mature size meant different things to different people, some wanting one thing, some another. Big mature size can lead to a higher maintenance cost and higher greenhouse emissions too.

   However, lambing ease traits, lamb vigour, worm resistance and longevity tended to mean the same to everyone and might be much more attractive. (Although lambing ease may not need EBVs as ewes with lambing problems tend to get culled anyway). The scan weight/mature weight could also include worm resistance, and other traits, and be considered as a whole rather than component parts.

   It was concluded that the need is to get the message to people that don’t know about it, rather than to preach to those already using it.

   Consideration was given to what could be putting people off. The physical recording and extra work involved would stop some farmers recording. However, a commercial breeder does not need to record, just buy a recorded tup.

   Breeders may only record because their customers want it, and therefore the customers need to be encouraged to buy tups with EBVs to encourage continued recording.
Recorded sheep have a reduced carbon footprint and therefore ‘green’ payments should be available to encourage recording uptake. Recorded tupps should show financial gain over non-recorded tupps at lamb sales, but so far there has been little done to identify which sires produced which lambs at sale. Eid will help this, along with feedback from the abattoirs. Also, ewes from recorded tupps should produce more lambs per lifetime, but it may be difficult to identify them, particularly from the traditional multi-sire tupping groups. The group decided that the message should be clear and simple and that the customer should be aided in buying the best tup for their own system, whatever that system might be.

4. **SRUC Update – Lutz Bunger**
Lutz started by explaining that Jo Conington’s research was mainly looking at the genetics of the maternal side in sheep, and his research was more on the genetics of the terminal sire. The sheep industry does not make a lot of money, compared to other industries such as the poultry industry, therefore there is very little money available for research.
Lutz then talked through what is happening at the SRUC. The EBLEX-funded research and development on a lamb survival EBV is now finished, but there was no date for its implementation yet. A bid to EBLEX in August hasn’t received funding. SIGNET didn’t like the idea of looking at using ultrasound pregnancy scanning data for lamb survival analyses. However, they were interested in using existing data to work out ewe longevity.
A new saliva indicator of resistance to FEC (CARLA) shows promise but is yet inconclusive. The research will be running for a second year. Jo has submitted a research and development proposal to research resistance to FEC.

5. **Tag Format in Signet records**
It was decided that if, as a group, we ask Signet for the same tag format, then we should get it. This will be UK0[6 digit flock number] space [5 digit individual number] e.g. UK0123456_00001

6. **Membership Fees**
These will remain at £150 per member for this year.

7. **Website development, promotion and publicity**
There is some money available for website development, promotion and publicity, but it will have to be spent wisely. The website needs to be promoted to reach the maximum number of people and the information must remain fresh and up to date.
It was decided that a new section should be introduced that could be updated regularly. Many small regular changes would appear better than a single major change. There should be information available about the group to pass to others and links to other websites were required. Barry Sangster would focus on the website publicity. For now, a Facebook page would not be included, although a page for a blog or similar regular article would encourage people to visit more regularly. A website forum was discussed but decided against as it would have to be checked regularly for unsuitable material if the general public were allowed to use it.

8. **KTN Biosciences Membership**
At £100, the subscription for KTN Biosciences Membership was seen as a benefit for the group.

9. **AOCB**
The Sheep Breeders Round Table is from 1st-3rd November 2013, and this could be used to distribute leaflets to promote the group. Sandy and Ann Welsh are holding an open day at Mossfennan on Thursday 18th July 2013, on breeding and grass management, as part of five open days by Robyn Hulme looking at Profitable Sheep from Grass.

10. **Date of next General Meeting**
This will be on Wednesday 12th March 2014 after the AGM.

Campbell Tweed thanked Sam Wharry for chairing the AGM, Lutz (and Jo Conington in her absence) for arranging the Board Room and refreshments for us, and Katie Keiley for her presentation.
The meeting finished at 3pm.