**AHW Pathways Vet group meeting 26/10/2021**

**Comments added by Amy Jennings, Rachel Foster and Rudolf Reichel**

**Looking towards the pathway the ambition is to gather data….**

**General questions asked:**

* **What information would we collect for each species under each area? (some will be N/A for certain species)**
* **do you think the data is baseline or stretch ambition? Surely the data need to be as accurately as possible and reflect reality? Targets can be baseline or stretching? Perhaps I misunderstand? In looking at the types of data that might be useful to collect some are easier to provide and more likely to be available so would be seen as baseline datasets. Those which are more complex or less easy to obtain are seen as “stretch” ambition.**
* **How could the data be used if we had access to it? Who is the “we” here? Defra will be the data owners with a number of data users across the Defra group.**
* **Any time considerations – i.e., for the dataset over what time period would it refer to so any analysis post-collection would understand whether it is a season/production year or other metric.**
* **Time period important and a common stumbling block in farmer collected data if you are not clear about it. Production year tupping to tupping works well. Needs to be standardised if we want to benchmark or compare data. Agree. And will it need to be done at a certain time of year to ensure the datasets are comparable? This is something we need to explore further so it is clear what time period we are using – do we specify the past 12 months or a certain time period? Is this the same for all the datasets for example.**

**STEP ONE Application Data**

* **Name, address, contact information.​**
* **Species and eligibility (over 10 cattle, 20 sheep or 50 pigs)​**
* **Location (holding number)​**
* **Vet practice​**
* **Assurance scheme membership**

# Top 10 TOP QUESTIONS FOR SHEEP FARMS That could be captured in advance of the first visit or on an Annual Basis to inform the vet visit discussion

**1. Are sheep still kept on your farm? Select one of the following:**

* Yes
* No and no current plans to keep sheep for next 12 months
* No but may keep sheep again in next 12 months
* What if no sheep on that farm, but somewhere else on rented land?

**2. What sheep types are kept – select all that apply:**

* Pets
* Breeding
* Fattening
* Wool production
* Pedigree – but how do you define this is it membership of Breed society?
* Open farm/ zoo
* Milk
* To control vegetation in protected wildlife areas? Conservation

**3. Type of farm (location)**

* Upland
* Hill – need definitions
* Lowland
* Common grazing

**4. Sourcing replacements**

* Direct from known farm/s
* Via market
* Imported
* Only rams – breed own replacement ewes

**6. Do you sell sheep for - select all that apply:**

* Breeding
* Rearing on - Stores
* Meat
* Wool
* Pets
* None of these
* Other (specify)

**7. Management**

* Common grazing
* Housed – fattening
* Housed - lambing
* Outdoor

**8 Is the farm part of an Assurance Scheme**? Select **all that apply** of the following:

* Not part of an assurance scheme
* Red Tractor
* RSPCA Assured (formerly Freedom Food)
* Quality Meat Scotland
* Organic Farmers & Growers
* Soil Association
* Scottish Organic Producers Association
* Welsh Organic Assurance Scheme
* Supermarket supply chain
* Other Assurance Scheme - specify ………………

**9. Other livestock**

Do any other livestock have direct or indirect contact (staff, vehicle, equipment, shared buildings) with sheep on the site. Select **all that apply**:

* Cattle
* pigs
* Poultry – e.g., chickens, turkeys, gamebirds, ducks, geese
* Camelids – e.g., alpaca, llama etc
* Equines – horse donkeys
* Other – specify …………………..

**10. ????**

Source/s and types of additional feed in addition to grazing?

Date when flock health plan was last reviewed.

Flock size/s or numbers

Suggestions to include the following although noting that Number of animals differs over the year, needs to be considered what time period used as per comment above.   
1.No. of breeding ewes  
2.No. of replacement ewes   
3.No. of rams (can be further divided in rams retained/rams sold).   
4.No. of lambs (can be further divided in lambs retained and lambs sold).

**These were some of the suggested questions at the sheep group session some of which are captured above:**

What is the average age of breeding flock?  
Which breeds do you have?  
Is this a Breeder or finisher unit?  
What are the production aims? - Breeding / fattening etc  
Is there a health plan in place?  
What time of year do they lamb?  
Is this an Outdoor/indoor system?  
Is it Upland or lowland farm?  
Is it Closed or open flock?  
Is antibiotic use being discussed with vet?  
Is there a bisosecurity plan in place?  
Assurance scheme membership?  
What do you sell sheep for - breeding, rearing on, meat, wool, pets, none, others

# What information would we collect for each species under each area

A set of support documents or prompts are needed for farmers and vets to support the vet visit and aid the completion of the Review.

The aim is to create a suite of information, available as a central resource via a webpage which will provide both an overview and sector specific guides.

4 key areas for consideration as below -

**Collection of data** - this is being completed by the Design Group

* What elements needs to be considered for vet and farmers.
* Farmer engagement with EID vital for data recording

**A biosecurity review** – pig/poultry groups may already have some materials to use as a guide.

* What elements need to be considered for vets and farmers?

**A review of medicines usage**

* What elements need to be considered for vets and farmers?

Has to join with current medicines recording

**Recommendations and monitoring**

* What elements need to be considered for vets and farmers - utilisation of data both for benchmarking and subsequent recommendations

Vet group to lead on this point with review of sector group feedback.

# Suggested Data for collection

**Data shared with vet and submitted and stored for analysis use – But who provides this? Is it the vet? Is this factored into what the vet is paid for the visit? How simple will this be?**

**What is this data hoping to show? Suggest start simple with AB use…**

* **Numbers of animals**
* **On farm medicine use**
  1. **Endemic disease test results (anthelmintic resistance )**
* **Mortality rates**
* **Mobility scoring / lameness assessment**
* **Biosecurity review**
* **Health status (?)**
* **Vaccination status (?)**
* **Body Condition Scoring (?)**

**The previous three bullet points – to what animals/age group/time of season will they apply? The assumption is that all data would be on the animals present on that holding but may vary depending on the nature of the farm, previous engagement and other factors. There are no restrictions on what animals this might apply to. At this stage we are not proposing to include vaccination status for sheep (cattle and pigs yes) or body condition scoring for any species. Vet group recommended for health status to ask -** Need to ask basic questions for the start e.g.  
1.if they are members of any accreditation/assurance scheme

2.whether they carry out post-mortem assessments  
3.act on abattoir feedback  
4.do any testing in terms of nutrition.   
Need to define what an appropriate level of health care would be.

**Not all data will be available for all farms so data will only be collected if already available and can be obtained pre-visit or as part of the on-farm Review. The Review will be flexible to focus on vet/farmer priorities and not necessarily focussed on actions to collect data.**

# Detail for each proposed element

1. **Numbers of animals see above**

**What animals are you counting?**

**When are you counting the animals – set point in year? Must be at a set time to allow comparison Yes we can set this at the time most appropriate.**

**Number of breeding ewes, number of Rams**

**Number of lambs? Is this lambs born, lambs survived, lambs sold?**

**Sheep bought?**

**Sheep sold?**

1. **On farm medicine use**

**Legal requirement to record medicines but variety of methods**

**Use of the medicine hub should be encouraged Yes this is our proposal for launch. No data will be collected outside of the hub. Farmers should share it with the vet as part of the discussion,**

**Begin with using this for antibiotic use (as Pig hub) Farmer/vet collaboration**

**Develop to use more for other medicines so it becomes a one stop shop. Ideal world!**

1. **Endemic disease test results (Too Ambitious?)**

**For sheep - anthelmintic resistance**

**The devil here is in the detail – need to understand more what the FECRT tests are all about. What is the proposed protocol? Vets supplying and administering the drenches and taking samples? Vet to collect post treatment samples as well as pre-treatment? In house or using a lab? Which wormers to test, all anthelmintic groups at same visit? Protocol for farmers that don’t have/ haven’t set up basic equipment needed like weigh crate. ..if external will individual results be reported back to the vet to interpret or just a lab overview comment**

**Defra say they have a pilot?? Lesley Stubbings not convinced**

**Might have been easier to target sheep scab…at least sheep scab has a pilot....in the middle of the RDPE/moredun project right now.....**

**Current plan is there will be a post-drench efficacy test for 10 animals following SCOPS guidance. Vets will have to sign off the testing and that might be supervising them or agreeing that the farmer can do it (if they are confident in their skills to do so). I understand that we may need to refer to this slightly different now due to the nature of the test and we will do this in any supporting guidance.**

1. **Mortality rates**

**For sheep this would be a negative – while useful for measuring production it might be seen as a negative and viewed as a measure for monitoring welfare. Also farmers may feel that it could single them out as having poor welfare….**

**Farmers get genuinely depressed recording deaths especially at lambing. Most farmers are familiar with recording scanning data, lambs born alive, lambs turned out, lambs weaned, and lambs finished. Losses can be calculated from this.**

**Adult deaths- record or use movement book gives an idea of seasonality of losses as well as numbers**

**Might be better to record scanning and lambs born (to establish losses conception to lambing to identify potential disease issues)**

**Lambing to lambs sold or lambs retained – to monitor losses birth to sale or retention (to establish potential disease issues in growing lambs)**

**Death of ewes/rams/adults… or ……..**

1. **Mobility scoring / lameness assessment**

**While lameness is clearly of concern to industry surely rather than go on your farm visit and count the number of lame sheep – which will vary depending on when you visit, better for sheep to leave this for the farmer to identify as requiring further discussion as part of the development of the flock health plan.**

**Part of health plan in first instance. Some idea of incidence can be gained from the medicines book if they are recording treatment reasons and again gives info about seasonality of problem. Adults? Lambs? A general look through the stock will often identify if lameness levels are likely to be high. Do a mobility score if levels concerning. Just saying you have too many lame sheep is unhelpful needs to be coupled with identification of the causes and sound advice on treatment and management e.g., 5-point plan.** Due to current concerns with this we are not proposing to collect this data at this stage but if farmers do have it available then that could form part of the discussion with the vet. We may look to collect this information in future iterations.

1. **Biosecurity review**

**Can we think of another name for this? Preventive healthcare?**

**Disease prevention? Preventing disease introduction and spread? Disease prevention and control?**

**Biosecurity- preventing disease introduction and spread**

**What might this look like? A checklist? A checklist works well for this. Risk assessment for each factor. And relevant advice or action. Yes a checklist would be a good idea. If there are any basic questions we could ask as part of the sector specific questions that provide any basic biosecurity information we could include at this stage and then iterate into a longer checklist in future iterations.**

**Personally, I like the crown estate checklist produced by Moredun**

**It signposts the big 5**

1. **Livestock movement**
2. **Quarantine**
3. **Diagnostic tests and vaccines**
4. **Hygiene OK but where? In the lambing pens?**
5. **Health plans**

**Then goes onto identify key diseases – should these be point for discussion – identify the one of most concern to the farmer**

**TB**

**Crypto**

**PGE**

**Johnes**

**Fluke**

**Mastitis**

**EAE/Toxo**

**CLA/MV/OPA/**

**Orf**

**Scab**

**Infectious lameness, virulent footrot, CODD**

**Or you could categorise**

**Reproductive/Abortion**

**Production limiting**

**Zoonotic**

**Welfare**

**Could SVS produce a guide??? Good idea**

**What sort of data could be recorded from this? Key trends in biosecurity weaknesses on UK sheep farms**

**I have had a conversation about “Biosecurity”**

**I have left guidance on Biosecurity**

**Biosecurity measures incorporated into FHP**

1. **Health status**

**Not sure what this means but is it membership of schemes?**

**Or What testing do they do**

**Blood sampling for trace elements Y/N**

**WEC’s Y/N**

**PME’s Y/N**

**E.g., cull ewe screens for iceberg diseases?**

**More formalised testing?**

Vet group recommendations below – we can add to these - Need to ask basic questions for the start e.g.  
1.if they are members of any accreditation/assurance scheme

2.whether they carry out post-mortem assessments  
3.act on abattoir feedback  
4.do any testing in terms of nutrition.   
Need to define what an appropriate level of health care would be.

1. **Vaccination status**

**Is this recording vaccines used?**

**Or is it recommending use of vaccines for health issues identified?**

**Should be both Proposed to record use of vaccines although not currently being included for sheep (although we can still recommend that for any suggested diseases if there are any you think we could capture at this stage.**

**Recommend use of vaccines for footrot Y/N**

**Vaccines in use for Footrot Y/N**

**Core vaccines like clostridial diseases, Pasteurellae Abortion....Vets can of course recommend use of vaccines as part of the Review but at this stage we would not record the recommendation centrally.**

1. **Body Condition Scoring**

**I think some progressive farms do this but how do you capture this data?**

**Is this a bit ambitious to log actual BCS or is it more about a discussion about BCS Y/N?**

BCS is important and underutilised on many farms. Needs to be highlighted to farmer regarding its value in the sheep enterprise. I suspect very few farms capture whole Flock data like this already. A progressive approach could be adopted e.g., year 1 discuss the benefits and look at production figures is there evidence of production losses that could be BCS related in which case needs to be more of a priority. Many farmers will estimate a rough average BCS for their Flock at key times this could be a start point to start discussion. Farmer training to improve accuracy would be required. If they did seasonal Vet visits could be an integral part of each visit. Work up over several years of whole Flock recording. Needs technology and EID to be able to record and really make use of the data.

If we want to encourage more data collection and better use of on farm information EID is vital. Very few farms have engaged with this technology yet at anything over the statutory requirement.

As above, Due to current concerns with this we are not proposing to collect this data at this stage but if farmers do have it available then that could form part of the discussion with the vet. We may look to collect this information in future iterations.

Meeting series – To be discussed with the group - to be scheduled once a fortnight, from Thu 4th onwards

Forward look and priorities -

To review the sector group feedback on data proposition before the cut-off date of

Nov 9th.

Future topics – Vet advice offer for Grants – a strawman paper will be circulated in

advance of the next meeting for comment, the background document on whether

there should be vet advice will accompany this for reference.