

## **NSA SCOTSHEEP 2010**

### **BLAIRDRUMMOND FARM TO HOST NSA SCOTSHEEP 2010**

Scotland's biennial national sheep event, NSA Scotsheep, returns to Central Scotland this year and will be held on Wednesday, June 2, on the farm of Mains of Burnbank, Blairdrummond, Stirling, courtesy of host farmers, Douglas and Lynda Graham.

Organised by the Scottish Region of the National Sheep Association with Bank of Scotland as major sponsor, NSA Scotsheep is the main event for the sheep industry in Scotland and attracts thousands of sheep farmers from all over Scotland and the North of England, as well as visitors from elsewhere in the UK, Ireland and mainland Europe.

The packed programme of practical and technical demonstrations, sheepdog trials, stockjudging, competitions and seminars, together with a huge display of sheep breeds, an extensive trade stand area and the opportunity to view a well-managed sheep farm, makes NSA Scotsheep a "must attend" event for everyone with an interest in the breeding, feeding and marketing of sheep.

Already, 35 sheep breed societies have reserved space to mount displays of their breeds and more than 150 trade stands will ensure that all the requirements of the modern sheep farm will be on display.

Burnbank is an ideal venue for the event, with easy access from both north and south, and the flock of 650 Blackface ewes, 300 Mule ewes and 50 Bluefaced Leicester ewes (owned by Mr and Mrs Graham's sons, John (13) and James (12)), will be a big draw. The herd of 100 Limousin cows will also be of great interest to visitors.



**Douglas and Lynda Graham with sons John and James**

"We are delighted that Douglas and Lynda have agreed to host NSA Scotsheep 2010," said Caledonian Marts' auctioneer, Alastair Logan, who chairs the local organising committee.

“Mains of Burnbank is an immaculately kept farm and the Graham’s have a great reputation for producing top quality stock.”

The Blackface ewes are mostly crossed with Bluefaced Leicester tups – although 200 are bred pure for replacement purposes – and the resulting Mule ewes are crossed with Suffolk and Texel tups.

Prime lambs are sold through Caledonian Marts, where Lynda works four days a week in an administrative capacity, along with Mule ewe lambs not retained for breeding.

The farming enterprise extends to a total of 700 acres comprising 400 acres at Burnbank, which is owned, and 300 acres at the nearby rented farm of Munnieston. Cropping has recently been discontinued and the farms are almost all grass, except for a small acreage of maize for silage and 70 acres of rape for finishing lambs.

The market for lambs has firmed considerably over the past year and the outlook for producers looks more positive than it has done for many years. However, there are plenty of uncertainties as the whole agricultural industry debates the form support for agriculture should take post-2013 when the current Single Farm Payment (SFP) regime is due to end.

“The decline in the national sheep flock in recent years and continuing consumer demand for red meat has kept lamb prices high,” says Bank of Scotland’s head of agriculture, Sandy Hay.

“Farm incomes were boosted by the weakness of sterling throughout 2009 which helped increase the value of the SFP.

“However, any strengthening of the pound and proposed changes to the Common Agricultural Policy will create challenges for the industry. Farmers will have to remain focused on those management elements which deliver efficiency and productivity.”

Mr Hay said Bank of Scotland was delighted to be the major sponsor of NSA Scotsheep 2010 which underlined the bank’s continued commitment to the livestock industry, and the sheep sector in particular.

“Visitors to NSA Scotsheep will be able to obtain all the latest products and advice to enable them to tailor their management, capitalise on market opportunities and strengthen their businesses for the longer term,” he said.

Features of the event will include a farm tour, ATV competition, stockjudging, sheepdog trials, sheep dressing demonstration, seminar programme, crookmaking and wool spinning demonstrations. An area has been set aside for a farmers’ market, including crafts, and it is hoped to arrange a lamb cooking demonstration by Henry Nairn, followed by a Ready Steady Cook style competition featuring Scottish farming personalities. SAOS has offered to arrange for suppliers of ear tags to display their tagging systems.

Tractors and trailers will conduct visitors on a tour of the farm. Advisers from SAC will be present to provide information about the farming system and the local area and visitors will receive a dram and shortbread, courtesy of Stewart Distillers, at the stopping off point.

The Royal Highland Educational Trust (RHET) is arranging for 180 children from local schools to be given a conducted tour of the event and an opportunity to learn about the importance of sheep to Scotland's agricultural economy.

The stockjudging competition is being sponsored by United Auctions with total prize money of £400, including £50 for first prize in both the open and under-19 competitions and £100 for the highest overall score. Competitors will be required to judge three pens of sheep and three pens of cattle. Master judges will be David Gray (sheep), Kilsyth, and Stuart Fotheringham (cattle), Perth. Proceeds from the £2 entry fee for the stockjudging competition will be donated to RHET.

Top handlers from throughout Scotland will be taking part in the sheepdog trials which will be judged by leading Irish handler, Alistair Lytle from Co Donegal. The trials will be sponsored by McCaskies and shepherds' crooks will be presented to the winners.

Quad bikes for the ATV competition are being provided by Honda with the running of the competition being undertaken by Oatridge College.

Three seminars, sponsored by SAC, will be held during the day covering the topical subjects of sheep health, renewable energy and nutrition. Speakers will include Scotland's deputy chief vet, Sheila Voas, and Dr Chris Cousens and Dr David Bartley, Moredun Institute (health), John Gilliland, Northern Ireland, David Barnes, deputy director, agriculture and rural development division, Scottish Government, and Jim Campbell, environment and design consultant, SAC (renewable energy) and David Thornton, Rumenco, and Dr John Vipond, sheep specialist, SAC (nutrition).

NSA Scotsheep is also a qualifying event for the National Sheep Association's Young Shepherd of the Year award which aims to highlight the opportunities for youngsters in the shepherding profession.

The competition is open to young farmers' club members, agricultural students and young people working in the industry (not necessarily only shepherds) aged 26 years and under who will be required to demonstrate skills in ATV handling, sheep shearing, lamb selection and stockmanship.

The NSA Scotsheep Trophy and cash prize of £300, again sponsored by United Auctions, will be awarded to the winner who will be eligible to compete for the top prize of £1000 in the final on Tuesday, August 3, at NSA Sheep 2010 at Malvern, Worcestershire.

In addition to Bank of Scotland as major sponsor, the following mainline sponsors have been confirmed – Agri-Lloyd International, Caledonian Marts, Intervet Schering-Plough, Quality Meat Scotland, Rumenco and Shearwell Data. National sponsors include Carrs Billington, Davidsons Animal Feeds, Harrison and

Hetherington, John Swan and Scotbeef while Bayer Animal Health, JG Animal Health, Norbrook, Solway Recycling and Ventus Green Energy have been confirmed as local sponsors.

NSA Scotsheep 2010 will be open to the public from 9.00am. Admission is £12 or £6 for NSA members on production of 2010 membership card and students on production of student card. Under 16 years of age – free.

Further up-to-date information can be found at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk)

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