

## **HILL SHEEP FARMING OPERATIONAL GROUP**

of the Farmer-Scientist Network, is based at the home of The Yorkshire Agricultural Society, Regional Agricultural Centre, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, HG2 8NZ

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **1. Project Aim**

The aim of the project is to develop a participatory approach for farmers to identify hill sheep diseases of concern and for farmers to take part in finding the solutions to the problems associated with these diseases. This will be achieved by providing farmers with a method to gather the evidence of the disease problem; designing a framework to work together to share their knowledge and experience with others within a community; for farmers to contribute to finding the solutions necessary to improve animal health and productivity; provide a method by which the improvements to animal health and sustainable productivity can be measured.

This innovative method known as Participatory epidemiology (PE) is an evolving branch of veterinary epidemiology which uses participatory methods to improve the involvement of animal keepers in the analysis of animal disease problems, and the design, implementation and evaluation of disease control programmes and policies. Participation is the empowerment of stakeholders to identify and solve their own problems. True participation goes beyond consultation to give stakeholders a role in decision-making, so that they share in the control of the process. Participatory approaches involve a shift in the delivery of Veterinary Services, from a 'top-down' centralised approach to a 'bottom-up' approach of understanding the needs and priorities of livestock producers. The participation of livestock owners and other stakeholders in surveillance systems ensures that the systems are responsive to stakeholders' needs and increases their sense of ownership of and commitment towards sustaining the system.

The uses of PE approaches in veterinary and rural science have been almost entirely restricted to the developing world. However PE has a clear role to play in the developed world by strengthening broad stakeholder involvement in the analysis of disease problems, and can ensure that veterinarians and government understand the perspectives and priorities of farmers and other interest groups, and vice versa. Disease control strategies that are jointly designed are likely to result in stronger trust between actors, required levels compliance, and ultimately, better impact on human and animal welfare.

This project aims to support a participatory process for hill sheep farmers in Cumbria and Yorkshire to: identify diseases that adversely affect the health and welfare of hill sheep; develop methods to gather the data necessary to support the concerns identified; design and put into practice approaches to the evaluation and control of these diseases; develop methods to share the knowledge and experience gained with other farmers and stakeholders.

The project will:

- Encourage new thinking on how we gather and use data in an innovative system to gain empirical evidence from hill sheep farmers and inform/advise farmers on farm management changes necessary for the sustainability and growth of their farms.
- Exchange knowledge with, and provide training and education for farmers, environmental groups and local veterinary practices.
- Be driven by the practical needs of the farmers in response to pressures the administration of the stewardship schemes and their impact on the health and well-being of Hill Sheep Farming.

## **2. Purpose**

The purpose of the Operational Group is:

- To manage in consultation with the hill sheep farming groups to provide technical know-how and advice on choice and implementation of the new methodology and supporting technologies through the mobile farming application and hands-on data collation.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the project methodology and use for the mobile farming application through agreed key milestones. This will be done by comparing and analysing the use of the methodology with successful projects running in the developing world.
- To disseminate the findings from the project across the industry and implementing the findings successfully to other hill sheep farming groups outside of the project.

## **3. Roles**

### **3.1 Management Team**

A Management Team will be established to manage and review findings from the project. The Management Team will be made up of 8 participants from the original Operational Group that includes successful hill sheep farmers, research specialists and academics.

The management team will be responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the project.

Dr Amanda Carson is the named lead of the project and will act as the Chairperson for the Operational Group with authority to act on behalf/and for the Operational Group.

The Management Team will hold regular quarterly meetings either in person or over the telephone where appropriate and will receive regular project updates.

Any data collation gathered that requires further discussion will be addressed when necessary. The Management Team will advise the Hill Sheep Lead and Project Coordinator if any alterations to the project are required in order to disseminate this to the participating hill sheep farmers.

The management team will be responsible for ensuring the project adheres to the project milestones. Milestones will be managed within the project timeline which will be shared between the management team, hill sheep farming lead and the participating hill sheep farmers. This will be discussed at each quarterly meeting to ensure the project is keeping to time and raised as and when a project risk or issue is identified that could impact on the project.

The duties of the Management Team shall be to:

- Attend regular quarterly Management Team meetings in person or over the telephone where appropriate and will receive regular project updates.
- Ensure the project adheres to key milestones. Milestones will be managed within a project timeline which will be shared between the Management Team, Hill Sheep and Academic Leads. This will be discussed at each quarterly meeting to ensure the project is keeping to time and raised as and when a project risk or issue is identified that could impact on the project.
- Discuss any unusual data if/ when it arises when necessary.
- Ensure the smooth running of the overall project
- Champion the work of the project when necessary
- Chair Management Team meetings (Dr Amanda Carson)
- Advise and steer the project goals within the project proposal
- Act as the spokesperson of the Operational Group when necessary
- Identify and advise the Hill Sheep Farming Lead and Academic Lead if any alterations to the project are required.

### **3.2 Hill Sheep Farming Lead (The Farmer Network)**

The Hill Sheep farming lead will represent the local hill sheep farming groups and act as their collective voice. The Hill Sheep Farming groups who are involved in native sheep breed groups within Yorkshire and Cumbria have confirmed their participation, a total of 12 farmers (6 in Yorkshire and 6 in Cumbria).

The duties of the Hill Sheep Lead shall be to:

- Ensure participants of the hill sheep farming groups input data and observations in a timely manner.
- Report regularly into the management team with project progress.
- Responsible for the day to day running of the project.
- Liaise regularly with the management team, academic leads and the project coordinator.
- Ensure the project adheres to key milestones.
- Arrange outreach events and dissemination where appropriate following the project report

### **3.3 The Project Coordinator**

The Project Coordinator will work with both the management team, Hill Sheep Farming Lead and Academic Lead to share information, act as the secretariat for the Management Team, act as the main point of contact for the project, arrange quarterly meetings, take minutes, organise events, manage the grant claims and forecast the project, promote and publish final findings and other outreach activity.

The duties of the Project Coordinator shall be to:

- Deliver the aims of the Operational Group as agreed by the Management Team
- Support coordination and communication between the Management Team, Hill Sheep lead and Academic leads.
- Keep a contacts list
- Prepare in consultation with the Hill Sheep lead and chair the agenda for meetings
- Take and keep minutes of all meetings
- Supervise the financial affairs of the project
- Keep proper accounts that show all monies received and paid out by the Group to adhere with the grant recommendations
- Act as initial point of contact for people interested in the work of the Operational Group

### **3.4 Academic Leads**

The Academic Leads will work in collaboration with the RVC and University of Liverpool to support the participation of academic veterinary interns to take part in the project.

The duties of the Academic lead shall be to:

- Enable student intern engagement with the project
- Arrange site visits as appropriate
- Arrange any trials as appropriate
- Ensure any findings are fed back into the main project
- Engagement with existing and future veterinary students, individuals and practices to ensure greater impact.

## **4. Activity**

### **4.1 Communication and Outreach**

- Promote good practice examples and learning constructively and disseminate information to the industry within the UK and Europe.
- Disseminate findings and report from the project through the EIP-Agri website, the Yorkshire Agricultural Society Network (10,000+ members), showcase results at a series of outreach events to include; NSA events, local agricultural shows, Oxford Farming Conference, Annual NFU Conference, the Great Yorkshire Show, Farmer-Scientist Network Conference, PR, Social Media and Marketing channels.

### **4.2 Delivery of Project**

- Agree the final project design that will be delivered.
- Ensure that the project is delivered in line with project management and control systems in place
- Confirm that the each member of the Operational Group works towards the responsibilities detailed in the terms of reference and project proposal.
- Ensure the project is monitored and evaluated effectively
- Deliver a report from the findings of the project.

#### **4.3 Reporting Progress**

The Project Coordinator will be responsible for reporting progress to DEFRA/RPA. The Project Coordinator will also be responsible for submitting claims in a timely manner as agreed within the project milestones.

#### **5. Transparency**

All project updates and meetings will be shared with the Operational Group members and provided to the grant provider, these will also be published on the project website and shared with EIP-Agri Community where appropriate.

#### **6. Finance**

The project assets will be managed and held by Yorkshire Agricultural Society within a restricted fund. The restricted fund will be audited as part of the YAS Annual Accounts by an independent accountant. The Yorkshire Agriculture Society operates an 'open-book' policy. As the grant will be paid by the RPA in arrears, the Yorkshire Agricultural Society will be responsible for financing the project until each grant claim is paid.

#### **7. Sharing of Information**

The Operational Group are responsible for achieving the outputs set out within the agreement. Results are public and will be shared through outreach work stated in point 4.1. All results and outputs will be shared with non-group members.

#### **8. Geographical Coverage**

The Operational Group will be based in Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The respective Hill Sheep Groups will operate in a series of locations across the Yorkshire Dales and Cumbria. The report will be disseminated regionally, nationally and across Europe.

#### **9. Meeting Arrangements**

##### Operational Group Meetings

- Four meetings of the Operational Group to be held annually as needed.
- All notification of meeting and meeting papers will be circulated to members by email.

##### Exceptional Meetings

A Meeting may be called by the Management Team to discuss an urgent matter. The Project Coordinator shall give all members seven days' notice of any Exceptional Meeting together with notice of the business to be discussed.

## **10. Resources**

The Yorkshire Agricultural Society will manage the EIP-Agri Grant of the Operational Group in support of the chosen programme of activity. The Yorkshire Agricultural Society will be responsible for the staff members directly employed on the project.

## **11. Review**

The Terms of Reference and procedures of the Operational Group will be reviewed annually. The annual review will consider any amendments and revisions needed to improve the:

- Terms of reference
- Purposes and roles of the Operational Group
- Membership and performance of the Operational Group
- Communication and engagement
- Activity programme
- Administration arrangements

In addition, the Operational Group may be reviewed as a result of guidance or requests received from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA).

## **12. Alterations to the Terms of Reference**

Any changes to this Terms of Reference must be agreed by at least two-thirds of those group present and voting at any of the regular meetings.

### **Conflict of Interest**

From the project start, the Operational Group members will be asked to declare any conflict of interest and will be required to sign the 'Conflict of Interest Declaration' held by the Yorkshire Agricultural Society. Declarations will need to be made in reference to payments for services, equity held, and intellectual property rights. Updates on any conflict of interest will be required at each meeting of the Operational Group. The Chairperson and Project Coordinator will agree as to how this will be managed by either instructing members; not to take part in discussions of certain matters, not to take part in decisions in relation to certain matters as appropriate.

### **Dissolution**

The Operational Group may be wound up at any time if agreed by two-thirds of those members present and voting at any bi-annual meeting. In the event of winding up any assets remaining after all debts have been paid shall to the Grant issuer, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA).