



# Electronic Identification (EID) for sheep production

*Is EID for management purposes a worthwhile investment of time and money?*

## The Challenge

The use of EID tags is a mandatory requirement introduced in Scotland 2010 to aid sheep traceability.

The monitoring and logging of information could provide a powerful management tool, however some farmers and crofters have found using EID tags burdensome.

## The Research

Two management systems are being tested. One system uses EID-based technology and the other uses conventional means to assess weight and condition. The research started in 2011 on a flock of 900 Scottish Blackface and Lleyn ewes at SRUC's Hill & Mountain Research Centre.

The EID-based technology is combined with an auto-drafting weighing crate to help monitor body weight and weight change.

The information gathered by both systems is used to make decisions on flock management, including the allocation of individuals to feeding groups, targeting health treatments, and selecting ewes for culling and lambs for slaughter or sale.

Pedigree, performance, economic and labour data are being collected and compared over four-year on both systems.



## The Results

The research has found that EID based technology can aid sheep management when taking decisions on feeding, worming, drawing animals for slaughter and selection for breeding.

It can save time and labour for the farmer, reduce handling stress for the animals, reduce paperwork and increase ease and accuracy of recording.

A calibrated sheep auto-drafting weighing crate can further ease manual labour usage, record and sort up to 500 animals per hour. Over the whole year, this can lead to labour savings of 30-40%.

On the research farms, average differences in net margin between the two systems were found to be around £4/ewe; indicating a saving in employed labour meaning for 900 ewes a minimum of 3 years to pay back the cost of the purchased equipment.

## The Impact

EID technology can help improve farm efficiency, welfare and economic margins, even on hill sheep farms.

Data is useful if management time is also provided to interpret what is being recorded.

## Project Detail

**Project start date: 04/2011, finish date: 04/2016**

**Email: [claire.morgan-davies@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:claire.morgan-davies@sruc.ac.uk) This work is being carried out by the research team at the Hill & Mountain Research Centre, Scotland's Rural College, Kirkton Farm, Crianlarich, W.Perthshire.**

**SRUC receives financial support from the Scottish Government's Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS), Programme 2: Land Use.**

**For further info: [http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120252/hill\\_and\\_mountain\\_research\\_centre](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120252/hill_and_mountain_research_centre)  
Summary printed 10/2015.**

### Further Information

For more information on farm business management, sheep systems and making use of EID contact your local SAC Consulting office or SAC Consulting beef and sheep specialist at **[beefandsheep@sac.co.uk](mailto:beefandsheep@sac.co.uk)**