

Factsheet:

Technology to Improve Business

Performance and Resilience Part 2:

Sheep



**Farm
Advisory
Service**

National Advice Hub

T: 0300 323 0161

E: advice@fas.scot

W: www.fas.scot

In this series of three fact sheets an arable, beef and sheep farmer have been interviewed to find out what key pieces of farm technology they cannot do without.



Rob Parrish farms with his family at Hassendeanburn near Hawick in the Scottish Borders. This organic farm extends to 312 ha and supports a breeding flock of 700 ewes and lambing hogs, 250 head cattle fattening enterprise and 122 ha of cereals and conservation.

The Texel x Mule ewes and hoggs lamb from mid-March with the first fat lambs sold at the end of June. All the lambs are away by October and in 2022 they averaged 19.9kg at £121 per head. Percentage lambs reared are around 185-189% so this is a high output flock that justifies a labour input at lambing. Ewes are housed from mid-January in the main 49m x 44m shed, with hoggs only house over night at lambing.

As labour is limited to Rob and his father and the services of night lamber Rob has been looking at ways to reduce labour input using technology.

Three years ago, the farm invested in a single centrally positioned remote camera in the lambing shed at a cost of around £1,250 (see picture below, the camera is mounted onto the metal collar beam).



This small and inexpensive technology has been a game changer, particularly at lambing. The use of teaser tups means Hassendean have a very tight and busy 17-day lambing period when it is all go. The camera allows the lambing shed to be monitored remotely from home at the shoulders of the start and end of the lambing period. Rob estimates this alone saves the business over a week of a night lamber's wage and is worth around £1,250 per season.

Using an iPad, Rob and his father can check the shed from home during the late evening and early morning to; observe adoptees without disturbance, that a recently born lamb has sucked and had colostrum, to identify any prolonged lambings. Being able to record and re-watch is also a useful equipment feature which helps with lambing management. The use of the camera also means that during a busy spring work periods one person is not tied to the shed all the time and breaks can be taken or other tasks completed. With sound and the ability to zoom in (to read an ear tag) from this centrally positioned camera stock can be observed in detail in across this large shed. Infra-red vision means ewes can be observed without disturbed at night.

The use of the camera is enhanced by other management practices at Hassendeanburn. All hogs are clipped in August so there is not a fleece and a half on them at lambing making a lamb sucking easier to observe. Rob has found feeding a total mixed ration (TMR) means the sheep are more settled as feed is available adlib leading to a calmer and more easily observed lambing shed.

Remote camera costs range from £1,000-1,500.

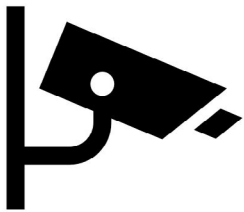
Future technology plans

Making more use of the compulsory EID tags via a cloud-based recording system will be the next step at Hassendeanburn. A cloud-based recording system is already in use for the cattle. Rob can see time saving from keeping flock records electronically rather than paper for both stock movements, vet and medicine and in measuring ewe performance, which is the key driver of this sheep enterprise. They will not initially be used for the prime lambs as they are on the farm for more than less than four months and are managed as batches rather than individual animals.

In summary

- Using a remote camera has saved this business time and money.
- The investment had less than a year payback period due to the saving in hired labour cost alone.
- Lambing is still a busy time but is more enjoyable as workload can be better spread across the team.
- For more information on cameras click on the link <https://www.fas.scot/downloads/livestock-monitoring-cameras/>

The table below summarises this fact sheet. A remote camera has resulted in the lambing labour bill being reduced at the shoulders of the lambing period for this farm and allows other spring jobs to be completed whilst keeping an eye on the last to lamb. Adding in other management practises such as clipping hogs and a TMR feeding system makes having the camera even more useful.

	Accuracy	★★★★★
	Time saving	★★★★★
	Value for money	★★★★★
	Easy to use	★★★★★

For more information on Technology and Business Performance please visit: [Technology to Improve Business Performance | Helping farmers in Scotland | Farm Advisory Service \(fas.scot\)](#)



National Advice Hub
 T: 0300 323 0161
 E: advice@fas.scot
 W: www.fas.scot