



Stew Burgess | Moredun Research Institute | ENRA Conference 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2025

# Collective action for the sustainable control of sheep scab – a living lab experience on the Western Isles of Lewis & Harris







Sheep scab – caused by infestation with ectoparasitic mite, *Psoroptes ovis*

- Endemic in

- Significant

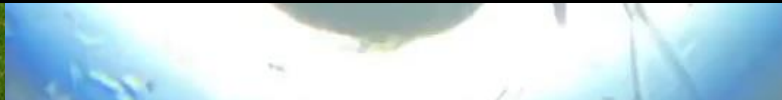
- Scalp

scab, costing



**Game changer - can find scab before it spreads, opportunity to get ahead of the curve**

- Scalp
- de

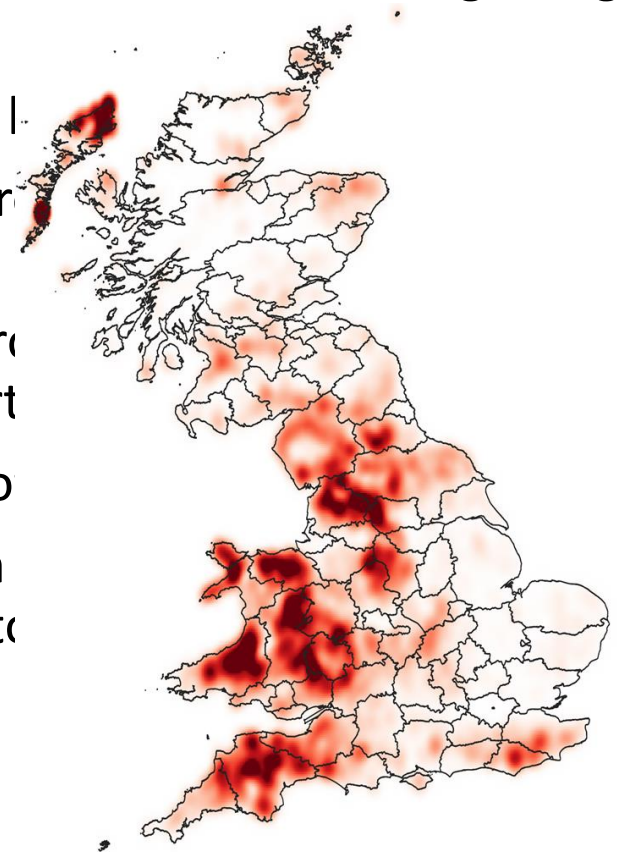


# Lewis & Harris – a Living Lab experience

**Living Lab: “real-world environment where stakeholders (i.e. citizens, businesses, and researchers) collaborate to develop, test, and refine innovations for specific local challenges”**

# Lewis & Harris – a Living Lab experience

- Lewis & Harris suffers from outbreaks of scab, no different to mainland
- Crofting system and farm interconnectivity with reliance on common grazing means support is required
- With island nature, local scab control achievable, I
- Early involvement and engagement with Sheep Producers, crofters, vets and trusted coordinators
- Living lab concept built around a multi-actor approach involving keepers with experts, stakeholders (livestock mart)
- Allowed practical solution to be co-developed (no
- The LL approach resulted in excellent buy-in from the feeling that we have all been on the journey to





# Year 1 – evidencing the problem and co-crafting the solution

- Crofter workshops, on best practice co
- Coordinated sheep scanning (Feb 23) –
- Positives identified
- Treatments with in
- Industry stakeholder



providing information

ss L&H at pregnancy

in five clusters

bing

ning (Zoetis Ltd)





# Year 2 – Coordinated OP plunge dipping

- Pilot provided evidence of the issue and the solution



*“you had something that probably hadn’t happened for 20 years, we had 10-20 people at a township fank stopping for lunch, having tea and sandwiches out of Thermos flasks that’s how it used to happen. All that stopped so we actually had that happening so that was...do away with the disease and all that but actually it brought something...it brought a bit of communal work back yeah so that was quite good.”*

# Year 3 and beyond – building agency and leaving a lasting legacy

- Follow up
- Crofters k
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Round
- Follow-up
- **incidence**
- Scottish k
- Discussio
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Round
- with >30k



g gaps)

ess

0.80/head

scab

(SAOS)

ember)



# Beyond the control of sheep scab

- Develop quarantine and flock health plans with crofters and local vet (best fit)
  - Further testing support as required – dealing with outbreaks
  - Eventual purchase of sheep
  - Support for faecal testing
  - Shetland or Orkney
  - Improved infrastructure
  - Pan-island network of stakeholders across the islands
- with and connecting  
working events in 2025



# Project Impact

**Impact: “the real-world difference research makes – changing lives, shaping policy, strengthening the economy, improving the environment, and enhancing health and wellbeing”**

- Exemplar for PSF scheme – increasing uptake and providing constructive feedback
- Reducing disease incidence and impact, increasing production/profitability
- The journey, to implement a practical intervention, helped empower the community to lead on disease control, building agency and ensuring lasting legacy, important when support is removed (slowly!)
- Crucial to grow this organically, building strong exemplar cases to motivate others (Ayrshire, Angus Glens & Orkney)

# Project Impact

*“Where we are now ...the ball’s in our court...we might never get it right but we have to attempt to start the process. “*

*“we still work together and still do these communal activities it's really important for a community and social aspect, crofting here is not an isolated thing.....connection with your neighbours, and we have to work together for it to work.”,*





**MRI:**  
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