

LOWER SHARPHAM FARM
LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT PLAN
2019-2020



Introduction

Lower Sharpham Farm is a 35 Ha holding consisting of primarily permanent pasture. It is in the agri-environment scheme Higher Level Stewardship administered by Natural England, is within the South Devon AONB, and has part of the holding within the Sharpham Listed Landscape. The farm is managed by Ambios Ltd, a nature conservation training organisation supported by Robert Owen Communities, a charity for people with learning disabilities. Current livestock numbers include;

- 13 cows, including 7 pedigree Belted Galloway heifers
- 22 breeding Zwartble ewes
- 160 Loham Brown and Rhode Rocket hens.
- 4 ducks

The aim of Lower Sharpham Farm is to create a farmed environment that is friendly for wildlife and that offers safe and inspiring opportunities for engagement for various audiences. Principally these break down into 2 categories

- Those interested in nature conservation training or volunteering with an interest in the role of livestock for improving habitat for wildlife and aiming for better understanding in nature conservation
- Those coming to the farm as work experience or for therapeutic benefit. Lower Sharpham Farm operates as a care farm for people with learning disabilities. Up to 30 people who ROC support actively participate in farm activities daily (Monday to Friday) and carry out, under supervision of ROC staff the day to day management of the farm and garden.

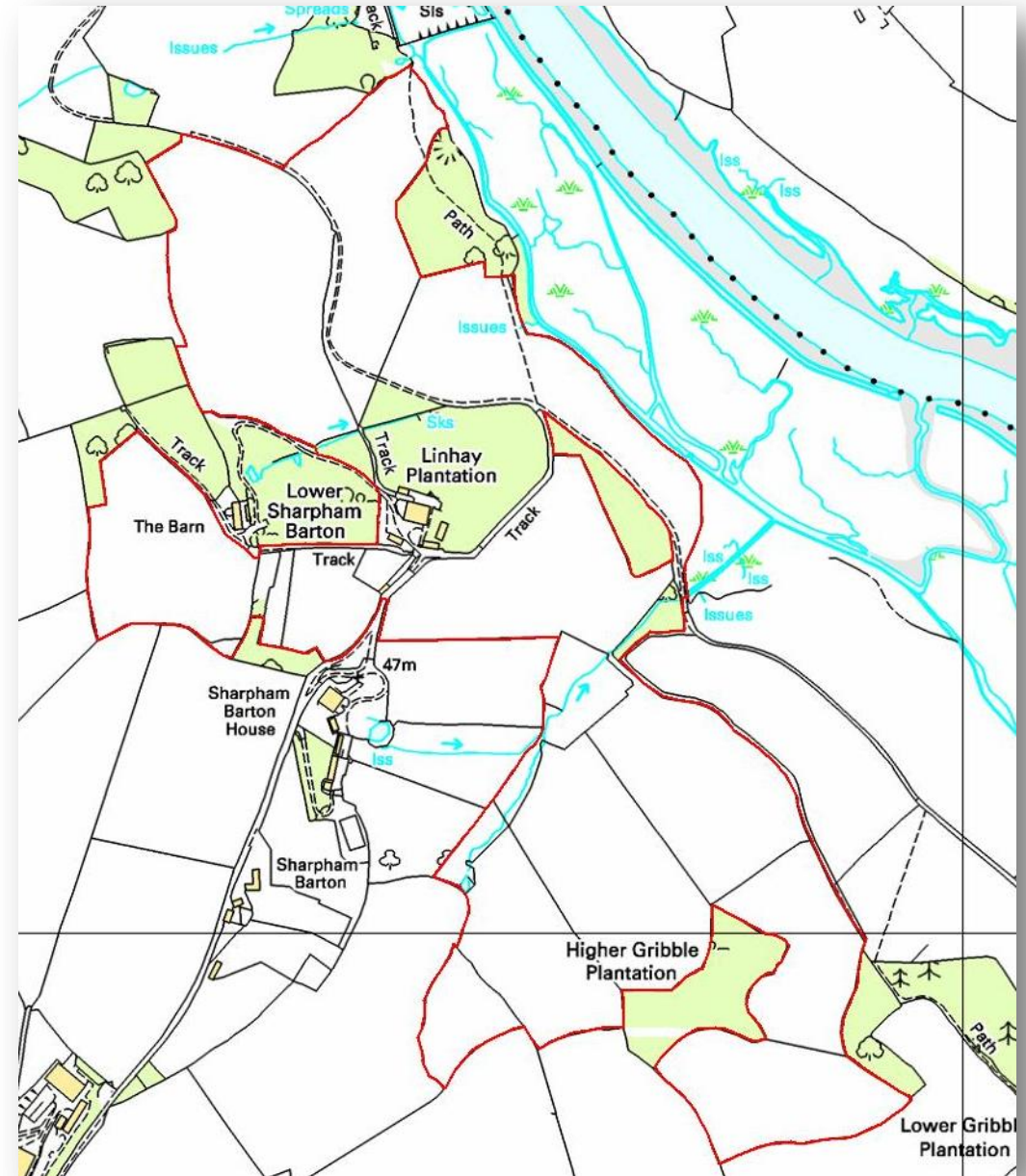


Figure 1: Farm Map

Farm Strategy;

Lower Sharpham Farm is in agri-environment scheme Higher Level Stewardship, a grant scheme to assist with management of the farm for wildlife and biodiversity. Capital funds improved the infrastructure in 2014 (planting orchard trees, building hedges and fencing) and ongoing revenue funds support the day to day management (planting pollinator crops including clover, barley and wild bird seed, pasture management) as well as improved educational access.

Alongside the farm work there is day service care farm operation for adults with learning disabilities and a residential training program for nature conservation students who learn and live on site. The aim of the farm is to integrate the different audiences whilst tackling the farm work all the while providing educational/work experience/therapeutic opportunities. Furthermore we aim to generate a premium from our produce by selling locally and build a reputation as a site that supports people and wildlife in innovative ways. Examples include;

- Farming for wildlife; beef and sheep farming activities that are genuine, authentic, and provide real examples of agricultural jobs, with an emphasis on environmental outcomes. Livestock grazing is monitored by Conservation students and trained staff to ensure optimum grazing and complicity with HLS agreement
- Eggs; daily feed and watering of hens and collecting eggs leading to delivery day where eggs are sized, stamped and processed in order to distribute.
- Wildlife boxes; locally grown and milled wood made into bat boxes by the learners at the farm, sold to local Natural History wholesaler.
- Crops; seed grown in the wild bird seed crops harvested for bird feeders set up in order to catch and ring local and migrating birds.

Our farmed produce (beef, lamb, and eggs) are sold and used in a number of ways;

- *The LSF network*; to friends of the farm, families of the visitors, staff and supporters of the Sharpham community, those engaging with the other aspects of the farm activity (learners on the programmes)
- *Local outlets*; Greenlife wholefoods outlet, Sharpham Trust, the Almond Thief bakery
- *Farm gate*; people dropping in, produce placed at the top of the lane sold to passers by
- *Bunkhouse and Linhay*; the Linhay provides kitchen facilities for the day to day users, the bunkhouse for the residents. Some of the produce will be available for use at the farm for those staying, connecting their living experience with the land.
- *Wholesale*; occasionally livestock will be sold to organic wholesaler *The Wellhung Meat Company*



Livestock management;

The welfare of the livestock will be utmost importance. Due to the nature of farm and of the people accessing it, the engagement with livestock the breed, management system and protocols adopted for handling livestock need to be considered as a priority. Furthermore the ambition of the farm as a farm for wildlife, particularly in relation to the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement adds a further layer of consideration. A number of principles have been adopted in order to support these key areas of operation.

Livestock welfare

- The work program of the people accessing the farm will prioritise animal care, identifying signs of injury and ill health to the farm manager who will in turn respond to the need
- Staff will be trained in identification of livestock ill health, and signs to watch out for
- Stool samples will be taken as required to identify signs of intestinal parasites and photos taken when signs of ill health appear in order to identify the problem
- All animal handling will only be carried out with a trained member of staff present and any animal health administration will only be carried out by the farm manager unless responsibility has been delegated to a trained member of staff
- The vet will have a working relationship with the farm manager in an advisory role and the farm manager will utilise the vet expertise as necessary.
- The farm manager will establish a network of farm advisors (local farmers) in order to find the most appropriate approach to animal welfare

People engagement

- The breed of livestock support the engagement aims of the farm. animals are calm and passive, and when livestock show signs of aggression they will be moved on as priority. Animals will be trained to work with people (e.g. sheep and hens to come to the sound of a bucket with nuts in being shaken – sound association with reward)
- Barriers will be put up to protect livestock from public and public from livestock where interactions occur (national cycle track, public right of way). Livestock stage (pregnant, with calf, young stock etc) will be considered when grazing

Wildlife aims

- Staff and trainees involved with animal management will have a basic understanding of the HLS agreement and pressures on the land demanded by the grant condition in order to understand and support and further the wildlife aim of the farm.
- Interpretation of the wildlife aim will occur as priority to share the aim of the farm with the visitors accessing it as an educational tool (interpretation panel and television screen/poster/map)

Hens

The farm has 150 point of lay hens in one wooden hen house. These birds are free range and access 2 x fields of grass in rotation. Point of lay birds brought in (organic) from Ben Wetherden farm. Replaced at point of reduced laying or at 3 years old.

Housing

- 1 x hen houses.
- The house dimensions are 12m x 5m giving 60m² floor space.
- There are 27 laying boxes in the shed and sufficient perch space for at least 200 birds
- The birds are free range and can come and go from the house through the day. They are locked in at night to protect from predators.
- Lights installed with timer activated in morning to ensure maximum laying and ease of cleaning.

Feeding

- Organic layers pellets ordered from Mole Valley Farmers brought in 25kilo bags one ton/order – stored in hopper with feed transported to house by metal bin
- Feed is available at all times. Occasional supplement with organic corn and greens from the garden
- Feed checked and replenished daily or as the need requires.

Animal Health plan

- No notable routine health administration required
- Dust bath with wood ash from farm wood burners available at all times
- Annual clean and spray down of the hen house in October. Hen house opened in February 2017 built new.
- Routine checks for loss of feathers around neck and rectum. If spotted the bird can be separated from the rest of the brood and housed in an isolation area until their feathers re-grow.

Improvement plans

- Reseed paddocks where birds access.

Movements and sales

- Class a eggs sold to Greenlife, Sharpham and the Almond thief
- All remaining eggs sold at farm gate
- No new hens expected over management plan year

Cattle

Housing

- Stock kept outside for majority of year
- Over winter in main yard barn; 2 x bays
- Main barn (identified as barn in figure 1) dimensions; length 30m, width 20m. Three horizontal sections split into 2 x 8m sides and 14m central space.
- Main barn split into five sections as identified below
- The 2 x animal housing offer a total surface area approx 250m² giving sufficient winter housing and bedding/feed storage for the number of animals identified above.

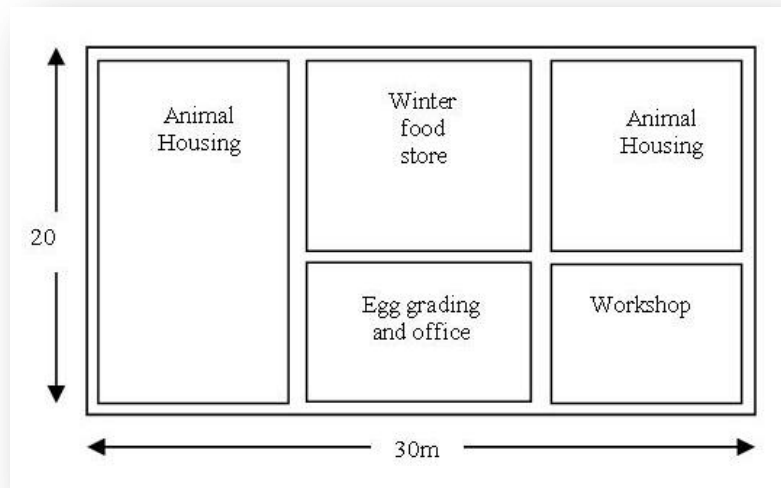


Figure 2: Barn Layout



Figure 3: Site Layout

Feeding

- Summer grass
- Occasional use of organic Nuts – ordered from mole valley farmers
- Winter feed of organic haylage & hay – made on site
- Organic mineral licks sourced from Mole Valley Farmers (Rumigan Organic approved) kept off the ground to avoid cross contamination with badgers.

Animal Health plan

- Spot on administered through the summer (every 5-6 weeks) to reduce risk of fly related problems – high prevalence of blowfly.
- A garlic and vinegar homeopathic mix administered fortnightly to manage fly and midge problems
- Historically problem with new forest eye transmitted by fly between cattle. Regular monitoring of livestock crucial and as soon as identified treatment by application of cream prescribed by vet
- Hoof trimming to occur annually or as required if more frequent
- TB testing every 6 months (all clear granted in October 2018)
- Internal parasites managed by low stocking densities from the outset
- Single whole herd treatment administered at point of turn out in spring.
- Regular checking of stools for signs of parasite load
- If signs are present (losing condition, numbers seem high in stools) stool sample taken and sent for analysis. On site McMaster slide also available for use.
- Depending on outcome of sample, permission sought for treatment from Soil Association for targeted treatment
- General health monitored by the work team daily when out in the field and brought into barn when any medication needs to be administered
- Calving to occur in the field. Intervention sought no more than 1 hour after initial identification of labour. Intervention only to be administered by farm manager or trained member of staff.
- Seek Soil Association permission when illness demands prescribed medication
- When in over winter cattle to have access to outside for minimum of 10 hours/day. Locked in at night.

Movements and sales

- This year will see the remaining non pedigree stock sold, and replaced with a further pedigree heifer and bull to make 8 breeding cows and a bull.
- The bull will go in late summer aiming for calving in late spring 2020
- The body condition of cows 30 days before breeding need to be at around a Cdn BCS of 2.5 to 3 to be ready to breed. Heifers should be at a Cdn BCS 3 to 3.5 to be ready to breed.

Sheep

Housing

- The sheep will spend most of their time outside with winter shelter available under trees
- Lambing to occur in barn (figure 2)
- Pens to be set up to separate lambing ewes. Small nursery also established

Feeding

- Mostly grazing permanent pasture
- Clean silage cut annually for winter forage
- mineral lick also available
- organic sheep nuts used to train sheep and offer additional protein

Animal Health plan

- Lambing will occur indoors but they will remain most of the year outside.
- 2017 season due in May
- Well draining soil and good shelter will support health; however sheep are prone to foot problems. Routine daily checking of the animals to identify welfare issues are crucial
- As soon as lameness identified the individual animal will be caught and sprayed with Foot and Master with Violet.
- Twice annual foot trimming to assist with foot management problems.
- Individual animals showing signs of ill health to potentially come into main barn to stand on dry ground and to monitor condition.
- Grazing rotation will also occur to ensure no parasitic build up occurs. Low stock levels to also support internal parasite management
- Clean grazing to be made available at critical times of breeding cycle (turn out after lambing e.g)
- Single use of Rycoben white drench to manage parasite burden at time of lambing. Permission sought for any subsequent use as deemed necessary
- CROTECT to be used as fly control for breeding flock. Single annual use for whole flock. Permission sought for any subsequent use where necessary (significant fly problem)
- CROTECT to be used on lambs
- Zinc sulphate foot baths used (May & November) to harden feet and manage foot problems
- Ewes should have a condition score of 3.0-3.5, or 2.5-3.0 at time of tugging

Movements and sales

- 2018 lambs (x8) to sell as meat in April 2019
- All 2019 ewes to remain with lambs throughout 2019.