

Disposing of fallen stock

A mobile incinerator is proving a successful alternative to the Fallen Stock Scheme for a group of producers in a remote part of Cumbria. Wendy Short reports

LAST YEAR, seven Cumbrian farmers secured a 40% capital grant from DEFRA's Rural Enterprise Scheme towards the £11,500 purchase price of a mobile incinerator.

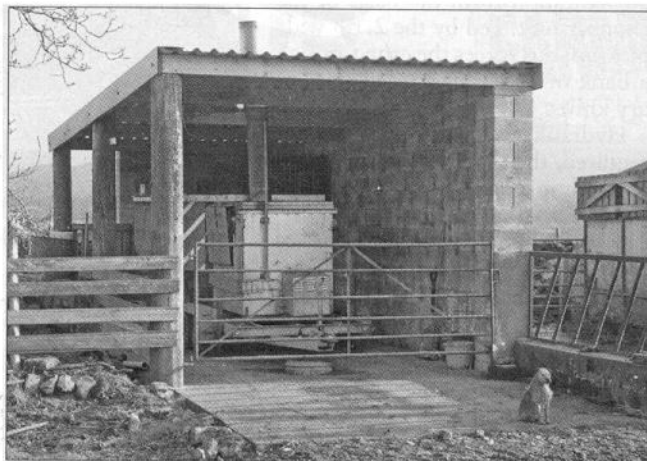
Bought in spring 2004, it is used to dispose of deadstock from a collective flock of 8000 breeding ewes, as well as calves from the Cockermouth group's suckler and dairy herds.

One group member is sheep and beef producer Will Rawling, who works part-time for the DEFRA-sponsored farm support organisation Cumbria Rural Futures.

From its initiation, he had reservations about the ability of the National Fallen Stock Company to cope in his part of the country. Biosecurity is also a concern for Mr Rawling.

"I was not convinced that the scheme would be able to service remote farms like ours, especially at peak times like during lambing and spring calving," he says.

"There is no large-scale incinerator in our county. Most carcasses



The Tamar mobile incinerator has an approved operating site on each farm.

have to be taken over the border into Dumfries.

"We prefer to be in control of our own livestock disposal. There were health worries having wagons carrying fallen stock from other farms coming into our yards."

Each member needed an Environment Agency and State Veterinary Service-approved site for the incinerator because carcasses must not be moved from farm to farm.

A tank is also required to collect liquid run-off and fuel spillages. However, in some cases, it is permitted to divert liquid waste into existing slurry and dirty water facilities.

"Some farms already had suitable concrete pads. I built mine at a cost of about £1000 and put in a 1000-litre plastic collection barrel," says Mr Rawling.

"The site had to be close to a 240-volt supply because the incinerator uses electricity for start-up and fan temperature control."

Other practical necessities include a vermin-proof storage box to hold carcasses awaiting incineration. The

COCKERMOUTH CO-OP

- Seven livestock farmer members
- One Tamar mobile incinerator
- Running costs – £1.35 per 100kg
- Biosecurity benefit

site must also be fenced off from livestock.

Mr Rawling, who is based at Hollins Farm, Ennerdale, runs the machine on red diesel. "It costs £3-£5 per six-hour burn, which will dispose of up to 300kg," he explains.

"The machine will burn a full load as efficiently as one animal, without any unpleasant smell or smoke."

Maintenance has been minimal, but he says the real test will come this spring when the unit will have to cope with its first full lambing period.

"Up to now we have never been in the position where two people need the incinerator at the same time. We have sorted out a daily rota system for busy times, washing and disinfecting the machine each time it is moved."

"We need to ensure that everyone is serviced fairly but it takes cooperation from the group as a whole to make things run smoothly." ■

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"I was not convinced that the national fallen stock collection scheme would be able to service remote farms like ours, especially during lambing and calving," says Will Rawling.

MOBILE INCINERATOR

- The group's Tamar mobile incinerator was supplied by Worcester-based Waste Spectrum International. It is recommended only for animals weighing less than 300kg
- Burn capacity is 50kg/hour. Anything above this requires an operator's licence and planning permission
- The firm points out that once the machine is running at optimum temperature, costs can be as low as £2.50/ewe.
- The unit can be run on lpg, mains gas or red diesel
- A range of sizes is on offer, with prices starting at £5500. A new model to handle fully-grown cattle should be on the market later this year
- There are restrictions on the disposal of ash from most classes of livestock. Secure storage is needed and waste must be taken to an official landfill site
- For more information, phone 08703 800 550 or visit www.wastespectrum.com



The incinerator will dispose of up to 300kg in six hours at a cost of between £3 and £5.

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