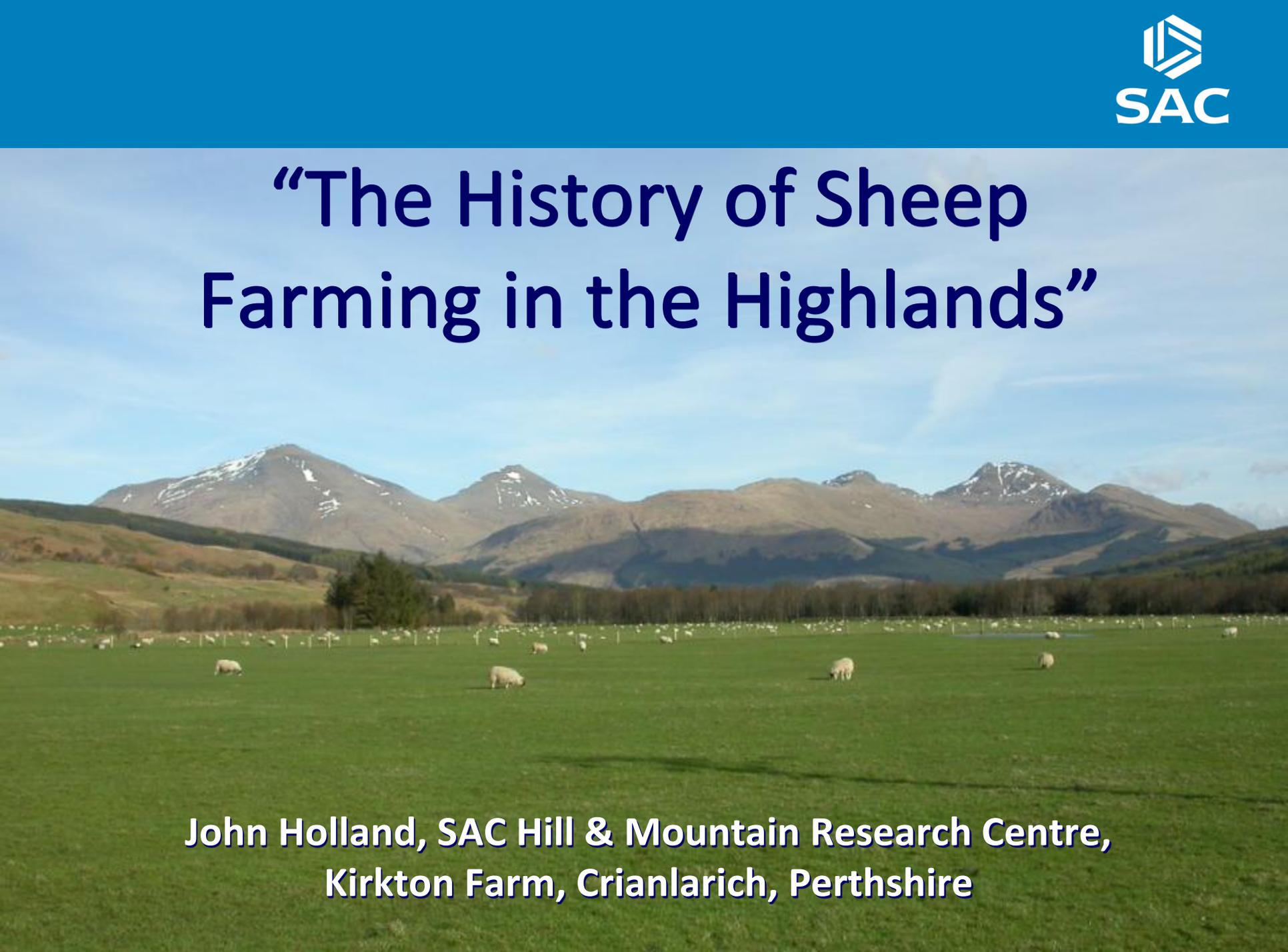


“The History of Sheep Farming in the Highlands”



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Early Farming System (Middle Ages to mid 18th Century)



- Subsistence farming with little bought or sold
- Traditional, transhumance farming system of seasonal grazing of hill pastures by livestock, plus some arable cultivation in the glens
- Small, lean sheep (9-11 kg carcass weight) kept mainly for their good quality fine wool
- Three main types
 - Northern type - Short tailed, with black, grey or piebald colouration, similar to current Shetland breed
 - Western type - tan-faced, probably related to current Welsh Mountain breed
 - Caithness & Sutherland - the Kerry, slow growing breed, with black face and small, short, narrow frame
- Animals taken to the hill pastures in summer



Shieling, Gleann a'Chlachain



Shieling, Gleann a'Chlachain



Blackhouse, Kirkton



Meadowsweet - yellow, green, black, red



Lady's Bedstraw - red, yellow



Thyme - purple



Bog Myrtle - yellow, green, brown, orange



Ling - yellow, orange, brown



White Water Lily - black, blue, brown



Tormentil - red



Wild Angelica - yellow, black



Broom - yellow, green

The Clearances and the Sheep Invasion

- Commercial sheep farming arrived in Argyll in about 1750 reaching Caithness and Sutherland by the beginning of the 19th Century
- Pioneer lowland farmers brought flocks from the south
- Blackface sheep dominated the early sheep industry in the West Highlands, Perthshire and Inverness-shire



**Scottish
Blackface**

Statistical Accounts for the Parish of Killin in Highland Perthshire



- **1791-1799** - “Stocking with sheep has now become so prevalent, that all the extensive grazings in this country are laid under them. The number of sheep supposed to be in the parish, at present, is from 26,000 to 27,000, and all of them of the Linton breed”

'The Song of the Foxes' (Oran nam Balgarean) *by Duncan Ban Macintyre (1790-1804)*



*'My blessing be upon the foxes, because that they hunt the sheep.
The sheep with the brockit faces that have made confusion in all the world,
Turning our country to desert and putting up the rents of our lands.
Now is no place left for the farmer – his livelihood is gone;
Hard necessity drives him to forsake the home of his fathers.
The townships and the shielings, where once hospitality dwelt,
They are now nought but ruins, and there is no cultivation in the fields.

There is no filly, nor mare with foal by her side.
Gone too are the heifers that suckled their calves.
No need is there of dairymaids, for every fold is broken and scattered.
No lad can earn a wage save only the shepherd of the sheep.
The good useful goats, they too are gone.....'*

The Clearances and the Sheep Invasion



- During the early 19th Century, the high price of fine wool led to an increase in the numbers of Cheviot sheep

The Clearances and the Sheep Invasion



- After 1860 the replacement of Blackface sheep with Cheviots was reversed
- At the end of the 19th Century, the number of wether sheep (castrated males) began to decline rapidly
- Hill land that had been grazed by Cheviot wethers was not suitable for Cheviot ewes, therefore graziers changed to Blackface ewe flocks
- 1860 – 40-50% of hill sheep Cheviots
- 1932 – 13% of hill sheep Cheviots with the rest mainly Blackface
- The carcass weight and fleece weight of the Blackface breed showed considerable improvement during the 19th Century
- Leicester Rams introduced for crossing in the first half of the 19th Century

Smearing & Dipping

- Smearing or salving was not practised by the Highlanders with their old native sheep, but was introduced into the north by the immigrant sheep farmers
- Tobacco juice used for dipping in summer
- In autumn the sheep were salved
- Salve - Wood-tar and butter
- Smearing began to give way to dipping after 1860

Deterioration of Hill Grazings



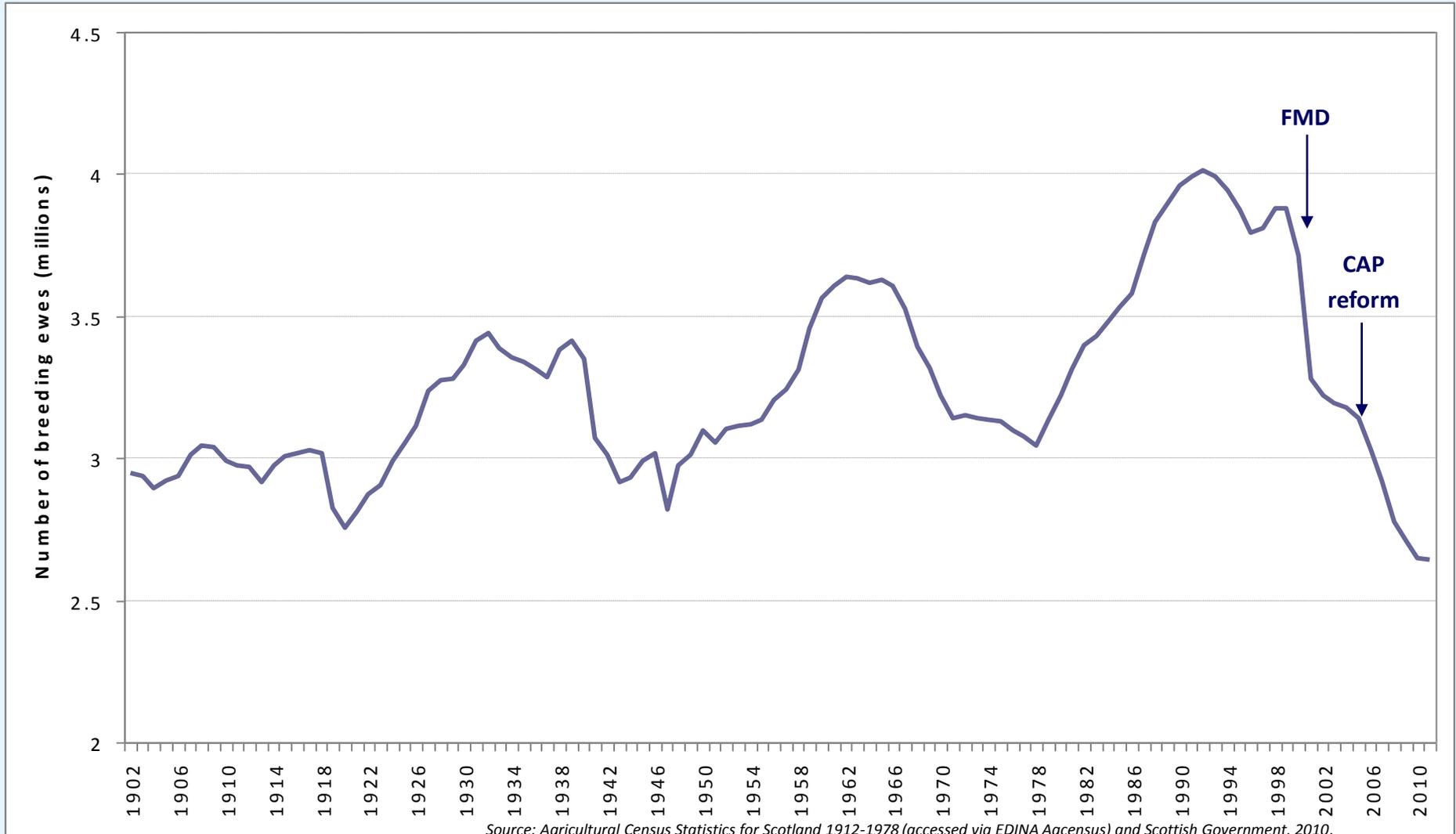
- Decline in the carrying capacity of the hill grazings
- Loss of arable patches and grassy cattle folds
- Disappearance of cattle from many grazings
- Spread of Bracken and Mat Grass (*Nardus stricta*) at the expense of more palatable grasses
- Reduction in heather cover
- Continuous removal of nutrients

Changes in Sheep Numbers from the mid-19th Century

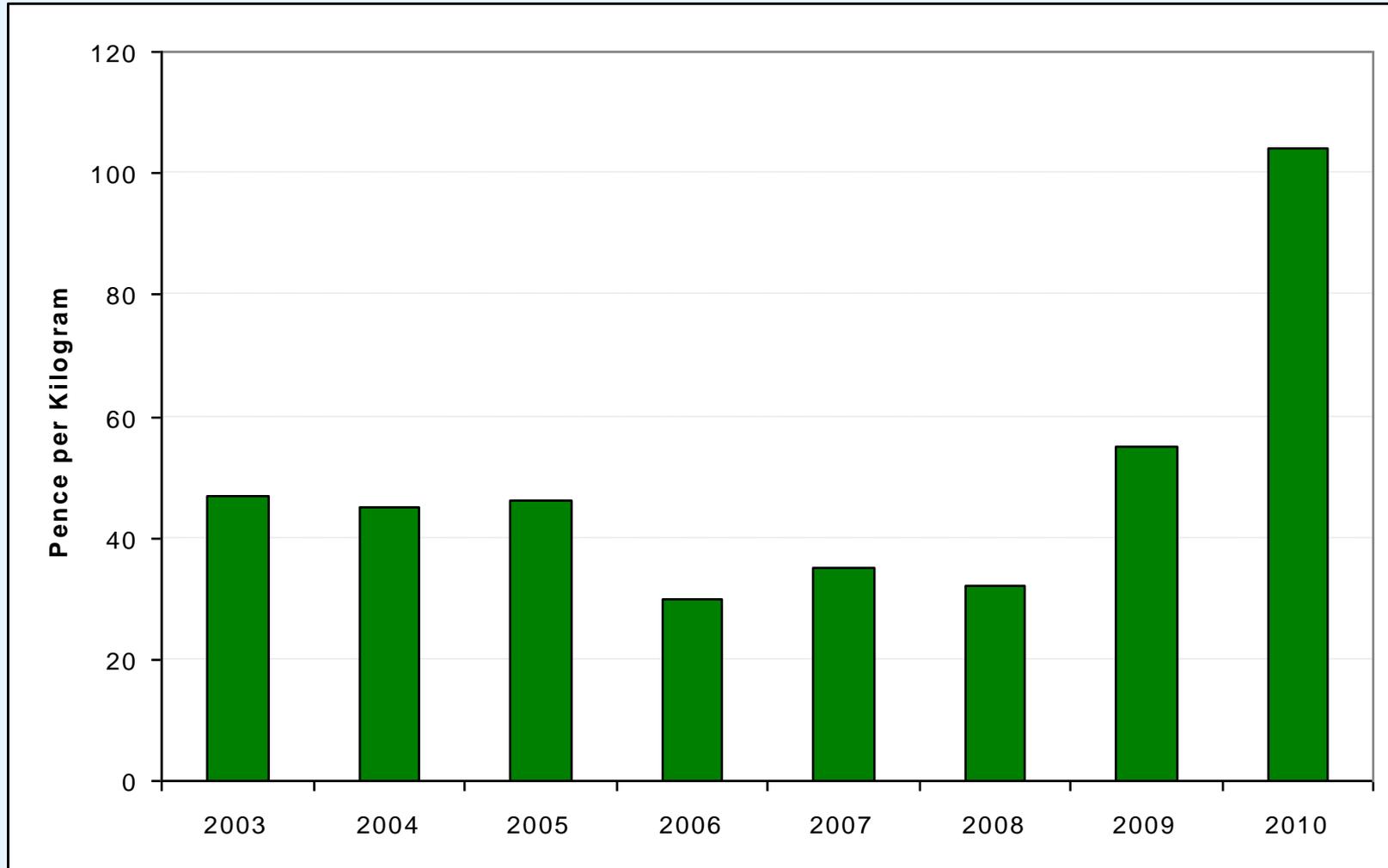


- Sheep numbers in the Highlands and north of Scotland increased by approximately 20% between 1855 and 1880, and then stabilised
- From 1895 until the start of the First World War, gradual decline in sheep numbers in the mountains, however in the northern lowlands numbers continued to increase
- In the first decade of the 20th Century there were approximately 3 million breeding ewes in Scotland
- Hill sheep numbers have fluctuated in response to economic factors, disease epidemics and severe weather events
- After the Second World War, government policies have increasingly influenced sheep numbers
- Sheep numbers have declined in the Scottish hills since the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in 2005

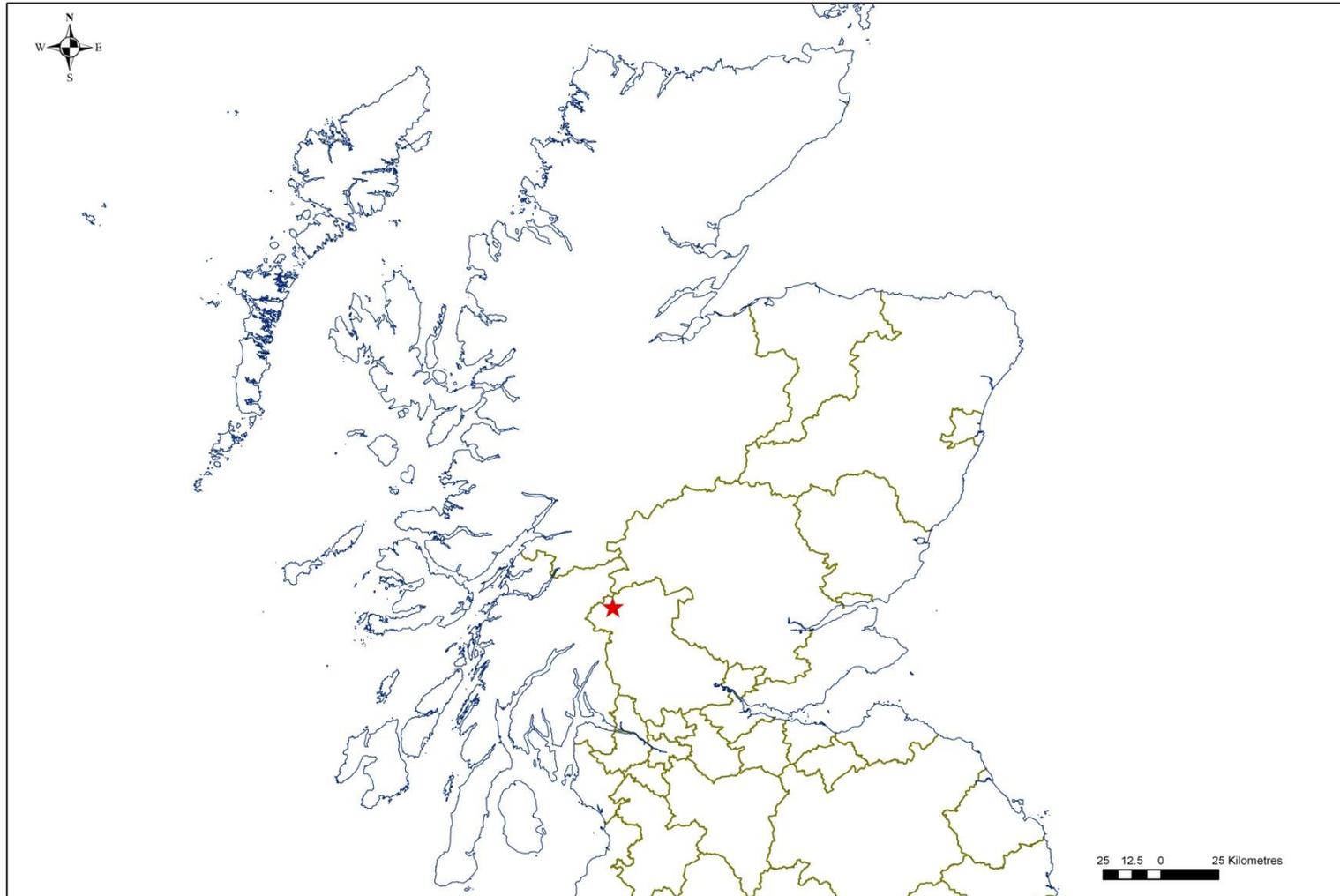
The Change in Breeding Ewe Numbers in Scotland 1902-2011



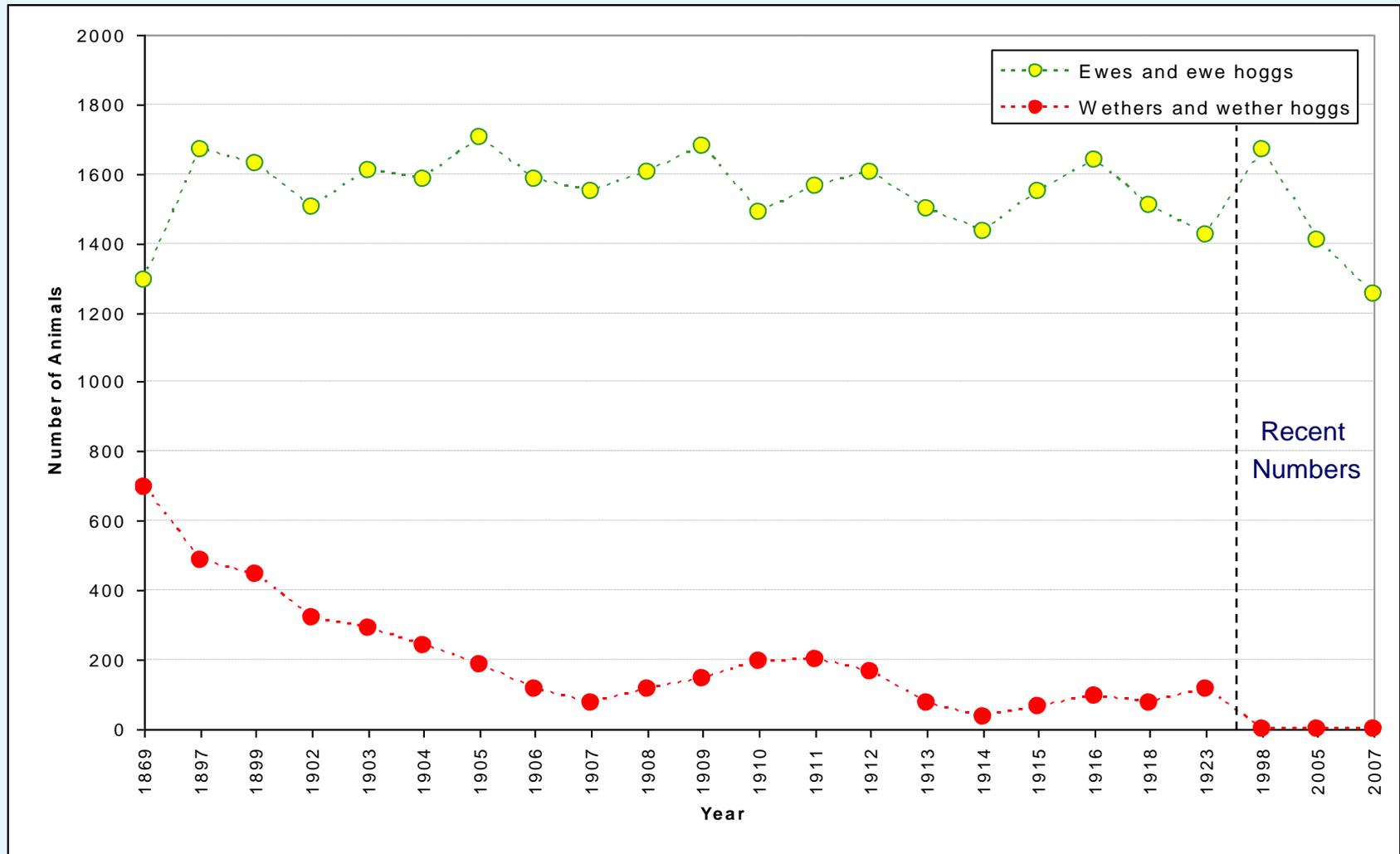
Wool Price – Kirkton Farm



Kirkton Farm, Crianlarich



Sheep Numbers at Kirkton Farm, near Crianlarich, Perthshire



Memoranda.

Coal weighed Kirkton 2nd Aug 1902
 4th Apr 1902

No	Weight	Unit	No	Weight	Unit
3952	1	3.15	3948	1	3.14
3952	1	2.26	3930	1	3.22
2377	2	4	3932	1	2.8
2419	1	3.14	3950	1	3.12
3950	1	3.20	3931	1	3.18
3939	1	3.3	3943	1	3.16
3947	1	3.25	3941	1	3.22
2572	1	2.26	3942	1	3.1
3953	1	3.5	3957	2	0.4
3949	1	2.14	3940	2	
		18 1 10			18 3 3

7 Fallm. Coal 3946 1, 2, 8
 18 3.3
 18 1.10
 38 2.21

Coal weighed McEwan

Coal	5209	1, 3, 6
Coal	5205	1, 3, 14
Coal	5212	2
Hog	5204	2, 0, 10
Coal	5216	1, 3, 21
Hog	5206	2, 0, 10
Coal	5215	1, 3, 14
"	5212	1, 3, 11
"	5213	1, 3, 25
Hog	5203	2, 0, 11
Sup Hog	5218	2, 2, 16
Coal	5219	1, 3, 11
"	5211	2, 0, 5
Hog	5202	1, 3, 24
29 3 15 Coal	5217	1, 3, 5
Proden	5799	1, 3, 14
Coal	5208	1, 2, 22
"	5210	1, 3, 1
Molten	5207	1, 3, 20
"	5200	1, 3, 10
"	5201	1, 3, 18
		40 0 19

Looking Towards the Crianlarich Hills from Kirkton Farm (circa 1880)



**Shearing
outside the
Blackhouse at
Kirkton Farm
(Circa 1880)**



Scottish Blackface Tups in front of Saint Fillan's Priory, Kirkton Farm (circa 1880)



Scottish Blackface Ewes in front of Saint Fillan's Priory, Kirkton Farm (2010)



Scottish Blackface Tups, Kirkton Farm (circa 1880)



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