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## Getting crofters involved

My team at SBUC's Kirkton & Auchtertyre farms, near Crianlarich, conduct research with a wider range of partners.

One example is TechCare, a new four year EU funded project, to assess how innovative technologies can be used to identify animal welfare issues in sheep and goat systems.

Our focus is on extensive and semi-extensive sheep systems here in the UK and – because of differences in farmer availability due to timings of lambing across the country – the priorities are being identified across two workshops.

For example, malnutrition and undernutrition can occur in ewes at any time, but is likely to be more common through the winter or when we get a late spring such as this year. The associated poor health of the ewe can then impact directly on her lamb. And of course, predation of lambs – particularly but not exclusively in the spring – is a growing issue across many of the crofting counties.

Once the five top priorities have been identified, existing or new Precision Livestock Farming technologies will be identified.

These technologies will then be assessed, not only to see which may provide early warning of welfare issues developing but also whether it is practical or cost-effective to do so.

Although we have been working with crofters in other projects, we are conscious that in TechCare crofting is under-represented. And, so, if any crofters are interested

in knowing more or becoming involved then please do not hesitate to reach out.