

## ABOUT MORAYSHIRE MONITOR FARM

**Farm Name** Corskie Farm, Garmouth, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7NN

**Meeting Number** 06

**Meeting Date** Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018

**Next Meeting** Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018

Corskie Farm is run by Iain Green in partnership with his mother and father. The family have been farming in the area for over 60 years. Over 1,440 hectares (3,560 acres) in total is currently farmed by the business.

**Arable:** The main arable enterprise consists of growing Spring Barley (535ha) for malting. Winter Wheat (86ha), Winter barley (70ha) and Spring Oats (11ha) are also grown, with the majority being used on-farm as livestock feed.

**Cattle:** The family run 380 cross cow suckler herd, alongside a 200-cow pedigree Simmental herd. Simmental and shorthorn bulls as well as AI is used to spread out calving across the year.

**Sheep:** There are 600 Mules and Mule cross Texel sheep which are lambed in April.

**Pigs:** At Corskie there is an indoor breeding herd of 380 sows, producing breeding gilts for Rattlerow.

*“The different farm enterprises are fairly well integrated,” Iain says, “as well as growing our own feed through the cereals side, we also use the manure from the livestock on the arable fields and pasture. We apply it differently in different areas, using our soil and yield maps to make sure we are controlling our inputs and maintaining good soil fertility and nutrient balance.”*



### Management Group

Andrew Anderson (Chair), Hugh Thomson, Robbie Newlands, Martin Birse, Robert Manson, Charlie Gray, Cameron MacIver, Ian McHattie, Stewart Grant, Stewart Stronach and Stewart Rothnie.

In addition, there are three students from SRUC Craibstone campus, who have been selected to sit in on Management Group meetings and then to report back to their college class.

## KEY MESSAGES

### ● **Preparing for Calving & Lambing:**

- Hugh Thomson (local vet and farmer) talked through some tips at calving and lambing with other farmers in the group also sharing their tricks.
- Hugh took along some essentials which should be on-hand at calving and lambing time:
  - Arm length gloves and lubricating gel for any assisted calvings and lambings;
  - New syringes and needles to hand when required;
  - Iodine to sterilise the navel when calves/lambs are born to prevent secondary infections;
  - Calcium with Magnesium injection to treat any animals with milk fever etc.;
  - General antibiotic to treat those who have had difficult calvings or lambings to fight infection, also antibiotic spray to help heal any scars after a caesarean;
  - Matacam for pain relief, if required;
  - Dopram, use a few drops under the tongue of slow/sleepy new-born calves/lambs to help stimulate stronger breathing pattern;
  - Phone number for your local vet practice – call the vet if there are any major issues on-farm.

### ● **Calving Detectors & Technology:**

- Two pieces of technology from MooCall were discussed at the meeting:
  - MooCall Calving Sensor – monitors cow movement and senses high tail movement prior to calving which initiates a text being sent to your mobile phone to alert you.
  - MooCall Heat Detector – the collar is attached to the bull and cows each have an EID eartag, once a cow is in heat the collar detects and reads the cows tag, notifying you as to when she was served. This will be useful for knowing when cows keep returning to the bull and when to expect to see calves on the ground from specific cows.
- There was a lot of discussion on how to fit the detectors to the livestock correctly, including a new rubber grip for the calving sensor which helps with positioning it correctly onto the tail.

### ● **Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs):**

- There was a lot of discussion surrounding EBVs, both on-farm at Corskie and in the hall with Neil Shand.
- The main consensus from the day was that EBVs should be used to aid in the decision making process when choosing a new stock bull, but should not be the only selection criteria used.
- Choose EBV traits which will benefit your herd, i.e. some bulls may have more maternal or terminal traits, while others may be dual purpose.

### ● **Barley Programmes – Managing the Modern Varieties:**

- Iain Lindsay focused on managing grain quality using a whole season approach:
  - Choose a suitable variety for your requirements and growing conditions;
  - Use the correct seed rate (newer varieties can have lower seed rates) and drill at optimum time where possible;
  - Apply N early to reduce second tillering. Aim to split N applications into 3.
  - Use a robust spray programme to control weeds and disease, use a PGR to reduce lodging risk and to help drive final yield and improve grain quality.

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Over 40 farmers enjoyed an interactive day discussing a variety of topics, in particular cattle;
- Andrew Anderson, chair of the Management Group, welcomed everyone to Corskie and explained the plans for the day.
- Everyone met at Corskie, before being split into 3 groups touring the following on-farm stations:
  - Iain Green talked people through the bulls that he has entered to the Stirling Bull sales, highlighting their EBVs (which the group would discuss in more detail later that day).
  - Hugh Thomson (local vet and farmer) ran through a list of essentials to have on-farm at lambing and calving time.
  - Niall Austin, from MooCall discussed the technology for tail mounted calving sensors and a cattle heat detection collar, which is attached to the bull.
- The afternoon session saw Iain give a detailed farm update.
- Neil Shand, British Simmental Cattle Society spoke about EBVs and talked through what each of the figures mean in relation to the herd on your farm.

*“Buying a bull can have a significant financial impact on a commercial suckler herd, be it positive or negative, so farmers really have to think through their decisions. I will be advising them to judge firstly by sight, and then use the EBVs to help them select the right animal for their herd requirements. Farmers should use the EBVs to work out which bull will give you the traits you most need, for example fertility, milk or growth and remember that the breeding values are not about the bull its self, but about its progeny.” Neil Shand*



- The community group were then set a task to discuss the EBVs within the Stirling Bull Sales catalogue and select bulls based on EBVs which may be useful for their herds. A wide variety of bulls were chosen and discussed at the meeting which showed the increasing understanding of the figures.
- Iain Lindsay, Syngenta gave an update on barley varieties and how to manage the modern varieties and the benefits that the farming business can achieve by efficiently managing a crop.

**Photo:** *Members of the community group study and discuss the bull sales catalogues to determine potential bulls for their own farms.*

## FARMERS UPDATE

Iain updated the group on what was happening on the farm, as follows:

- In January 2018 88ml of rain has fallen at Corskie already. In the whole of 2017 963ml fell at Corskie which is significantly more than the 580ml which fell in 2016.

- Iain has plans to sow the majority of his Spring Barley 2018 crop using Concerto and Laureate varieties, with around 250 acres of Fairing for high-N feed.
- The business is currently assessing options for EFA 2018, and plans to use the Fallow, Catch Crop and Green Cover options.
- Fencing and hedge planting for the Agri-Environment Scheme on the farm has been completed.
- The ewes have been scanned at 211%. Iain uses a ratio of 1 tup:35 ewes.
- Silage is in tight supply at Corskie this year; therefore Iain is purchasing draff at £20/t to help tide them over.
- The commercial cows are due to begin calving at the start of March.
- Iain has one pedigree cow to calf out of the January batch.
- The first pedigree Shorthorn cows at Corskie have calved. In addition, Iain purchased a pedigree Shorthorn bull at Stirling, adding further to the Shorthorn herd.

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Number of second calvers struggling to get back into calf within the commercial herd.
- Opportunities out there to forward purchase/sell grain.
- Shortage of locally available straw/forage could cause issues throughout the rest of the winter.

## ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- Gather financial and performance data and feed into FarmBench.
- Complete Machinery & Labour review at Corskie.
- Check lambing/calving equipment and medicine box to ensure adequate supplies.
- Use MooCall tail sensors to help detect calving cows.
- Take advantage of opportunities to forward contract grain for 2018.

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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