

ABOUT THIS MONITOR FARM

Farm Name	Corskie Farm, Garmouth, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7NN
Meeting Number	09- Beef monitoring systems, machinery costs and winter forage.
Meeting Date	Tuesday 16th October 2018
Next Meeting	Tuesday 4th December 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 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.

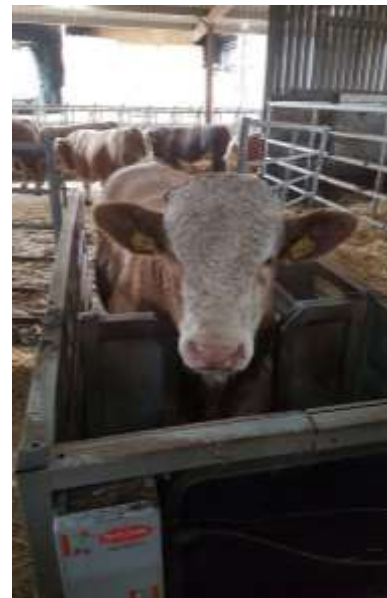
Photo: Stewart Stronach welcoming the Community Group to Corskie for Meeting 9.



KEY MESSAGES

- **Beef Monitor System:**

- Ross Robertson from Ritchie gave an update on how the cattle have performed since weaning, using the information collected from the Beef Monitor system.
 - Average DLWG in the batch = 2.8kg/head
 - One animal in particular has done well. Management tag 160 was 396kg on 12th July at last Monitor Farm meeting (newly weaned and on beef monitor for 4 days prior to meeting), at this meeting he weighed 765kg = 3.84kg DLWG.
- The Green Family are finding the Beef Monitor system very useful and beneficial to their farm:
 - Easier observation of animal performance;
 - Indication of potential health issues in individuals;
 - Monitoring of live weight of individuals, allows cattle to be booked into abattoir when reaching optimum weight;
 - Reduced labour required for handling cattle/moving cattle;
 - Health and safety improvements from less handling and moving of cattle.
- Ross Robertson from Ritchie explained how the Beef Monitor system has been designed to take the stress out of weighing cattle;
 - Research has shown that cattle can take 7-10 days after being weighed through a crate to put on any weight due to the stress involved in moving and handling.



- **Machinery Review:**

- Harry Henderson from AHDB talked about machinery on-farms UK wide;
 - Machinery & power costs make up the largest proportion of crop growing costs (28%).
 - Generally most farms over mechanised, with tractors and implements too large for their unit.
 - Harry stated that “There are growers using very high capacity machinery and not getting the return on their expenditure in reduced labour hours, costs or higher yields”.
 - The economic balance to find is between machine size, utilisation, area worked and running costs.
- Corskie’s machinery costs have been benchmarked against 21 other farms throughout the UK;
 - Most operations carried out by the business were at lesser cost than the average in the benchmark group, except from combining.
 - The combine costs at Corskie were considerable higher than the other farms in the benchmark group. However Iain justified this as Corskie was the furthest North farm in the benchmark group and therefore having the shortest harvest season, resulting in a requirement for higher capacity machines to make most of the workable hours.

Winter Forage 2018/19:

- Winter forage will be tight at Corskie this winter - options were discussed in detail.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Over 45 farmers attended the meeting to see and discuss machinery, beef monitor system, harvest results and plans for winter feeding with shortage of forage;
- Stewart Stronach chaired the meeting, welcoming everyone to Corskie before moving into the warmth and shelter of The Fochabers Public Institute's main hall.
- Everyone met at Corskie, before being split into 2 groups touring the following on-farm stations:
 - Ross Robertson explained and updated the group on performance of cattle on the Beef Monitor system, which Corskie is trialing as part of the Monitor Farm project.
 - Iain/Laura Green showed the group the bulls which are destined for the bull sales the following week, discussions were had about EBVs and what people were looking for in a new bull.
- On the way to the hall the group stopped to look at a field of grass which was over-seeded 1 month prior. Regrowth has been good and something which Iain would try again. Iain used a relatively high seed rate of 37kg/ha to ensure a dense sward. Photographs below are of the implement used for sowing and how the field looked after sowing.
- At the hall Iain gave an update on what has been happening at Corskie since the last meeting.



- Harry Henderson led active discussions on the costs of farm machinery and the results of the Machinery Review which was carried out at Corskie, benchmarking the farm against 20 others throughout the UK.
- Samantha Stewart examined some of the options available to 'bridge the forage gap' this winter. Sam has calculated that Corskie will be quite a bit short on forage this winter (approx. 400t DM), after suggestions at the meeting from the community group Iain will work with Sam and his team to mitigate costs where possible and have a feed plan in place for the coming winter months.
- Stewart Stronach closed the meeting by thanking The Green Family, the speakers at the meeting and those for attending, while also reminding everyone that "Corskie wasn't the only ones selling Simmental bulls next week!"

FARMERS UPDATE

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

- Harvest began on 17th July and was completed on 30th August - one of the earliest harvests at Corskie.
- Malting barley is all sold to an average of £179.09/t.
- Good conditions have made sowing winter crops relatively easy-going.
- Summer feeding of livestock has been challenging, cattle have been fed outside since July.
- Grass beginning to recover from the dry summer period; grass seed has been over-sown into some fields to promote fresh growth.
- Silage pits only at 60% capacity - forage will be extremely tight this coming winter.
- Second/Third cut silage to be don't this week - some of the latest silage taken at Corskie.
- Many fields have been sown with a kale and stubble turnip mix to increase forage stocks on-farm.
- 9% of spring calvers scanned barren; cattle programmed for IVF have not been a great success this year.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- The large challenge this winter will be ensuring feed stocks on-farm are utilised efficiently to ensure there is no unforeseen shortfalls in the spring.
- Forage budget livestock feed now, allowing any additional feeds required to be secured in advance.
- Late cut of silage this week will help bridge the gap.
- Mild weather proving difficult to control fly strike cases, even on sheep that have been treated.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- Carry out full forage budget for all farms to determine what (if any) extra forage/feed is required

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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