

## CLONHIE MONITOR FARM ANNUAL REPORT YEAR TWO

Andrew and Aileen Marchant farm 303 ha [upland PGRS & TGRS with ~40ha hill] at Clonhie as tenants of Buccleuch Estates. As new entrants in 2012 they have built their business to 900 lambing ewes, 18 Luining cows & heifers and have added 150 red deer hinds to their 303ha farm in the last 12 months. 25ha of silage is grown and fed to B&B cattle and young deer in the sheds and hinds outside.

At Clonhie the focus has been on improving soil health, grassland management and utilisation, alongside improving flock health and performance through understanding the health challenges, improving nutrition and better sheep genetics. The automatic sheep handling system is allowing Andrew and Aileen to record breeding and performance data for selection of the best replacement females.

### MANAGEMENT GROUP

Technical and Financial Performance are scrutinised annually. Despite some weather and health challenges the Marchants are proving that profits are achievable on an upland livestock farm.

The management group is unchanged from last year and has held 4 meetings to plan farm trials, and arrange dates, topics and speakers for MF meetings. The group also discuss technical and financial performance at Clonhie challenging Andrew & Aileen, suggesting opportunities which might be explored.

### MEETING TOPICS

7<sup>th</sup> meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018 – 50 attendees; topics included :-

- Winter grazing for ewes on deferred grass and kale, including calculations for allocating correct nutrition [every 3/4 days] and moving electric fences
- Bridging the food gap to lambing time using extra forage, purchased feeds or re-grazing fields
- Guest speaker Alex Brewster on improvements possible through recording performance data, soils management and improved utilisation [grazing control]
- Using Social Media to get the farming industry's messages across – Aileen Marchant

8<sup>th</sup> meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018 – 46 attendees; topics included :-

- Positive review of winter grazing trials on deferred grass and kale
- Introduction to the new red deer enterprise
- Soils analyses of fields at Glengar and discussions on lime applications & reseeded plans
- Plans for summer grazing rotations

9<sup>th</sup> OPEN meeting & hogget roast on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019 – 110 attendees; topics included :-

- 4 learning stations covered 1] Drought Resilience, by Rhidian Jones; 2] Technology for livestock farmers by David Owen; 3] Demonstration of automatic/electronic sheep handling system by Andrew Marchant; 4] The education gap and how farmers might bridge it by Aileen Marchant.

- Two theme reports were circulated at the event

10<sup>th</sup> meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018 – 35 attendees; topics included :-

- Guest speaker Charlie Morgan “GrassMaster” discussed reseeds, investigated soils in several fields and did an excellent presentation on soil health, grass and forage management and utilisation. “The potential of improved genetics in both grasses / forage crops and livestock alongside the more focussed management practices being introduced make this an exciting time to be a livestock producer.”

11<sup>th</sup> meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018 @ Nethertown Farm, Shawhead – 70+ attendees; topics :-

- Excellent visit, led by Glenkiln farm manager and management group member, John Wildman, to see & discuss health challenges, breeding, housing & system choices, at Glenkiln Estate.
- Guest speaker, Steven Sandison, on his Nuffield Scholarship report “Are Suckler Cow KPI targets achievable?” - Those operating in the top 25% have the best chance of survival

12<sup>th</sup> meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019 – 43 attendees; topics included :-

- Check out the winter grazing for ewes, recalculate grazing left and discuss options for Feb/March
- Decision process for going into Red Deer – Andrew Marchant
- Look at Cattle and Sheep Key Performance Indicators identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Compare Clonhie Sheep Gross Margins with QMS Upland Flock data.
- Guest Speaker, Sion Williams [Buccleuch Estates Bowhill Farms Manager], on information needed and decisions to be made for enterprise selection, benchmarking and integration.

## THEME REPORTS

1. Lamb finishing – covered 3 trials carried out at Clonhie on a] Creep Feeding; b] SMARTShot B12 injection and c] Entire / Castrated lamb comparison
2. Winter Grazing of ewes on a] Deferred Grass and b] Kale/Swede forage crop

## BUSINESS GROUP

Six Business Group members completed the FarmBench exercise in Dec 2018. The first farm visit was postponed by 3 ‘Beast from the East’ storms! The second farm visit was to Alistair Davidson in August. The group will visit a herd overwintered on kale in Feb 2019. The group also arranged visits to Douglas Greenshields at Southmains, Sanquhar in June and a trip to 2 Cumbrian farms in August, which were opened to all community group members and were attended by 30 and 23 respectively.

## EXTRA ACTIVITIES

Andrew and Aileen Marchant have hosted visits from groups of farmers / agriculture students from SRUC, Northern Ireland, and Iceland. Aileen Marchant arranged and hosted an in service training event for the local Primary and Secondary schools attended by ~ 75 teachers and school staff [supported by the management group]. They also hope to host an “Open Farm Sunday” event later this year.

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS: -

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