

## ABOUT ANGUS MONITOR FARM

<b>Farm name</b>	<b>Mill of Inverarity, Inverarity, Forfar, Angus, DD8 2JN</b>
<b>Meeting Number</b>	<b>05 – Soil Health and lamb finishing</b>
<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Thursday 18 January 2018</b>
<b>Next Meeting</b>	<b>Thursday 17 May 2018</b>

Mill of Inverarity Farm is run by The Stodarts and in total the business farms 358 hectares. The farm is a traditional mixed unit growing 130 hectares of cereals, with 160 suckler cows and an increasing breeding flock of 700 ewes. The business also annually buys in store cattle and lambs for finishing and has an operational laying hen enterprise on farm of 4,500 hens.

On the day the group took a closer look into the performance of the breeding flock at the Mill and the soil health around the farm.



**Management Group:** Graeme Mather, Fiona Lawson, Ian Pattullo, Neil McGowan, Stuart Lawrie, Duncan Wilson, Graeme Neill, John Kidd, Robin Norrie, Sam Ruddell.

## KEY MESSAGES

- The monitor farm did the #soilmyundies study on farm under different types of soil and plants. It highlighted very well the different conditions under each and showed where attention was required to improve organic matter.
- GPS farming and the use of soil maps has shown up areas on the farm which need closer attention paid to them to correct nutrient indices.
- Metabolic profiling of ewes offers a great benefit to ensure nutritional requirements of pregnant ewes are being met at the crucial stages of gestation, especially close to lambing.

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

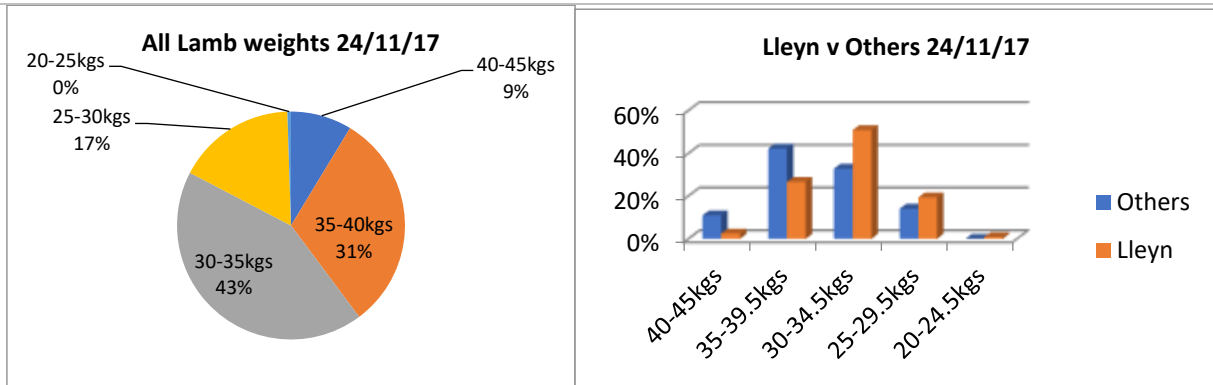
- The farm benefited from the “soil my undies” trial where cotton pants are buried in the ground and left for a period of 8 weeks before being dug up again to show organic matter content in the soil. At Mill of Inverarity this was done under different crops which included winter wheat, winter oilseed rape, stubble, new grass and an old permanent grass ley. The trial was a great visual way of showing the group what happened in the soil with microbial activity. The pants which were most deteriorated were under winter wheat which had had FYM applied before being ploughed down for winter sowing. This highlighted the impact muck has on re-introducing organic matter back into the soil and increasing microbial activity.
- Mill of Inverarity purchased some store lambs from fellow monitor farm Strone to trial on their finishing system coming from a hill flock to lowland ground for finishing. The lambs have had their weights monitored since arriving at the Mill and are showing varying daily liveweight gains and performances. Weights of the lambs on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017 ranged from 25.5kg to 49kg. The Strone lambs were then grazed on either stubble turnips or grass alongside homebred lambs to see how their performances compared. Results of this will follow.

## FARMERS UPDATE

- With the initial weights and first weigh in of the bought in Strone lambs the farm is starting to form the opinion of hill store lambs do not necessarily perform well when brought on to lowland finishing systems, especially when store lamb price as it a market high for the year. However, we await the results of selling the finished Strone lambs alongside the homebred lambs.
- The stubble turnips on farm have always provided a good source of winter fodder for lambs to graze and going forward the farm intends to trial different winter forages such as fodder beet and see the results from this.
- Organic matter in the soil is something which needs further investigating and from the “soil my undies” trial it has shown that there is not a great deal of organic matter present in some fields. However, this was done over the winter period when microbial activity would have been lower so the trial will be repeated at a different time of year, for comparison.

## FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

- The Strone lambs were one of the main topics up for discussion at the meeting and how greatly they varied in size and liveweight. The charts below show us this in more detail.



## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Finishing lambs on different winter forage systems**

Members of the community group were discussing the different types of winter grazing that could be used for putting lambs on to for finishing. Members of the management team already grow fodder beet for winter grazing, so going forward the Stodarts plan to trial different varieties of fodder beet, turnips and stubble turnips to look at options that give bulk and feeding quality for sheep over winter.



The Strone store lambs and the group discussing lamb finishing

## ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- Store lambs will continue to be weighed and the performance of the Strone lambs will be compared to the homebred, and other bought in lambs.
- More analysis will be done on soils to look at organic matter and find ways to increase productivity from arable ground.
- Blood testing of ewes may be done with discussion with the Vet along with some metabolic profiling which may take place to check all trace minerals and vitamins are in place for pregnant ewes.

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

David Ross & Stacey Hamilton

SAC Consulting

Arduthie Business Centre, Kirkton Road, Stonehaven, AB39 2NQ

Tel: 01569 762305

Email: [fbstonehaven@sac.co.uk](mailto:fbstonehaven@sac.co.uk)

