

ABOUT THIS MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Mill of Inverarity, Inverarity, Forfar, Angus, DD8 2JN
Meeting Number	07 – Open Day (Summary of Year 1)
Meeting Date	Sunday 15 July 2018
Next Meeting	Wednesday 25 July 2018

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 spring calving suckler cows and an increasing breeding flock of 700 ewes compared to the original flock of 400. 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.

This meeting was an open day to highlight the achievements of the monitor farm in its first year and summarise all the trials that have been ongoing. The discussion and talks were led by members of the management



team with the Stodart's open to suggestions for what the community group would like to see happen , or would like to trial, in the second year of the programme.

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 first year of the Mill of Inverarity has been a great success with changes made in both the sheep and cattle enterprises that will in no doubt increase performance and margins within the business.
- GPS farming and the use of pH maps alongside yield maps has shown up areas on farm which need closer attention paid to them for nutrient balances. This is an ongoing process on farm.
- The undersown barley trial on farm was successful in showing that greening requirements can be met without taking ground out of production and allowed the farm to determine which grass seed mix works best for them.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Within the cattle enterprise there have been two main things happening on farm in the first year. The main one has been that the fertility and herd performance was lacking so on investigating further it was found there was a problem with campylobacter within the herd. This disease reduces fertility in cows and stops them getting back in calf. This made the Stodart's question the way they originally ran the herd as a flying herd which meant stock was coming and going all the time from many different sources. Once the disease was under control and management practices put in place the farm are now aspiring to be a closed herd to increase biosecurity and reduce future disease risks.
- Sheep numbers have greatly increased in the first year of the programme as this is where Rory's main interest lies. The farm has gone from 440 breeding ewes to 700 within a year and this has meant more thought has had to go into what grazing is available on farm. This led to the development of a rotational grazing system at Drowndubbs. The final system in place over summer this year comprised of 50 acres of grass being put into a rotational system made up from ten 5 acre paddocks. Over the summer these 50 acres has been able to carry 275 ewes with twins and 80 ewes with singles following on. Rory has found it to be very labour intensive with the grazing shifts but worthwhile for the extra production from the area of grassland in the system. Next year, better fencing is required.
- One of the main aims on the arable side within the first year was to come up with a good system that included a productive greening policy in order to avoid having to leave land lying fallow. The use of undersown barley trials aided with this and growing alternative forages for the sheep enterprise were also trialled. The farm has now stopped growing winter barley as well as it was the poorest performing crops on farm and grown only as feed and an early entry for winter oilseed rape. Now efforts are focussed on getting spring barley in the ground early and concentrate on these crops.



FARMERS UPDATE

- The cattle herd has seen a few major changes within the first year, as already discussed campylobacter was found in the herd and is now being managed and culled out. This led to the Stodart's aiming towards becoming a closed herd. When looking at the overall performance of the suckler herd and labour requirements the monitor farm has changed from a split calving to spring only calving. This has streamlined the cattle enterprise, condensed labour requirements and should get better margins out of the same cows with the only difference being they calve in spring and not in autumn.
- For the first time this year the monitor farm trialled alternative forages for sheep in winter which has resulted in them growing 2 different varieties of fodder beet, stubble turnips and turnips.
- The rotational grazing system is a continuing development on farm which will tighten up as the programme continues but in its first year has already carried more sheep on a lesser grassland area and due to this 150 more bales of silage have been made for winter feed.



FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

- A summary of the cropping enterprises were given along with their net margins to show how productive each crop had been on farm. In 2017, spring barley had a margin of £362/ha, winter barley was £112/ha, winter oilseed rape was £367/ha and winter wheat was £180/ha. This led to discussion by the community group on the arable performance and as a result of this the farm no longer grows winter barley in their rotation. To tie in with the recorded yields from 2017 were spring barley at 6.5t/ha, winter oilseed rape at 4.5t/ha and winter wheat at 9.3t/ha.
- The finishing system within the cattle enterprise was also discussed for its efficiency and how productive the cattle were when bulls were compared to steers and heifers. The figures showed the spring bulls grown on as bull beef were most efficient as they were on farm for 470 days and generated an average sale price of £1,397. Steers were on farm for 574 days with an average price of £1,398 and heifers on farm for 653 days sold for an average price of £1,340.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- **More focus on the cattle finishing enterprise**

The group found the information on the cattle finishing enterprises interesting and have discussed the overall performance of the finishing systems at previous meetings. It is felt that more could be done to cost this out and improve not only financial performance but physical performance of the cattle. Going forward there is opportunities there to trial more EID kit for monitoring daily liveweight gains and tailor rations better to push cattle on.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- The farm intends to look more closely at its cow type and look further into changing away from Limousins.
- Monitoring of fodder beet and other winter fodder crops will continue to measure growth and performance when compared to one another.
- Harvest will get underway and more yield mapping will be done to see if the benefits of GPS sampling and precision applying of nutrients has paid dividends to crop yields.

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

