

## ABOUT THIS MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Mill of Inverarity, Inverarity, Forfar, Angus, DD8 2JN
Meeting Number	14 – <b>Innovation Safari</b>
Meeting Date	Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> July
Next Meeting	Thursday 31 <sup>st</sup> October
Report date	26 <sup>th</sup> July

The 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 150 spring calving suckler cows and an increasing breeding flock of 860 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.

This monitor farm meeting aimed to increase attendees knowledge through a variety farm visits in the Lothians and the Borders. Stopping at both of the Lothians Monitor farms – Saughland and Prestonhall and also Barnside farm, the group were able to see first-hand these different systems in operation.

**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 integration of livestock and arable systems can work effectively between farms when trust and relationships are developed, allowing each business to bring their expertise to the table.
- Developing clear business aims allows systems to be developed which will strive towards those aims. This is particularly important when evaluating a whole business and creating a work/life balance.
- Having an attention to detail can make all the difference when it comes to success or failure.

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- The two farm visits to the Lothians Monitor Farms generated much discussion about the integration of the two systems – arable and livestock. The close collaboration of the two business is long standing and highlights the benefits of collaboration when each business is able to focus on what it specialises in. The knock on effects from different enterprises in regards to profitability and sustainability were discussed both in relation to agriculture but also non farming enterprises such as storage at Prestonhall or offices at Saughland.
- Striking a work life balance is often difficult within the agricultural industry due to the nature of the work involved. The Walkers main aim is *“The production of easily managed, productive sheep and cattle by running low cost, simple systems which leave a respectable margin and time for family and social life”*. Gearing a business towards supporting family and social life is a novel objective in agriculture, however the benefits to quality of life were clearly visible. The group discussed how their

businesses could be adapted to take a more hands off approach to leave more time for other pursuits.

- A key theme throughout the day was the grazing systems in place at Saughland and Barnside. With different topography, field size and shape, livestock breeds, altitude and sward mixtures on both farms a key point that arose was that the success of both systems depend upon attention to detail. From using bolts to connect electric wires to the design of the farm infrastructure and width of farm tracks, the attention to detail clearly shone through. The group had several discussions about small changes which can have significant impacts on daily maintenance and system success.
- The adaption of machinery and altering of troughs, feeders, quad bikes were also discussed in detail. Some examples of this discussed include:  
The use of an electric fence crossing system on the quad bikes allows one person to seamlessly check groups of livestock without getting off the bike. Setting water troughs at gateways allows two paddocks to get water from one trough with ample watering space. Using wide laneways allows livestock to be moved easily and efficiently. Having moving feed barriers allows waste to be reduced when feeding silage to sheep.

## FARMERS UPDATE

- The cattle enterprises are continuing to provide difficult to justify given the low market prices.
- The agronomy / agronomist trial which has taken place on wheat crops has already sown differences with spray timings but the financials are yet to be analysed.
- There has been ample silage produced, a stark difference from the 2018 season.

## ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- The community and business groups will have a period of quiet as harvest progresses.
- The business group benchmarking figures will be checked again and corrections made.
- One theme report on rotational grazing will be written.

## FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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