

ABOUT THIS MONITOR FARM

Farm name Whitriggs, Denholm, TD9 8QR

Meeting Number 07 Flock Health & Improving farm Environment

Meeting Date 10th January 2018

Next Meeting 7th March 2018

Whitriggs Farm, near Denholm, is run by Robert and Lesley Mitchell and their son Stuart, with support from Stuart's brother, Alistair, during busy periods.

The Mitchells currently farm 442 hectares of mainly semi-permanent and permanent grassland.

Cattle; 140 Shorthorn X and AAX, with all calves not required as replacements finished on the farm.

Sheep; 1000 Lleyn ewes, tupped with Lleyn, Suffolk and Hampshire.

Arable; 28ha of wheat & oats fed to cattle.

Borders Monitor Farm management group- Andrew Tullie (chair), Scott Brown, Robert Catlin, Scott Girvan, Andrew Robinson, Megan Mabon, Jonny Williams.

Andrew Tullie welcomed 40 farmers and trade to Denholm for the 7th meeting. He thanked the group for their participation and involvement in the first year and encouraged this to continue for future years. He also highlighted the importance of understanding disease risks for livestock and hoped today would be useful in opening up discussions as this will be the best way for everyone to learn and take action on these issues. The main theme of the meeting was understanding and testing for "Iceberg Diseases" in sheep. After the recent meeting discussing lamb performance at Whitriggs it was decided to blood test a batch of old ewes to see if there were any underlying issues.

KEY MESSAGES

- It is important to test for diseases if you have any suspicion or see a drop-in performance, test 12 cull ewes.
- Post mortems may be required to find all diseases, so test 2 older ewes.
- There is no perfect answer for control of MV, work with your vet to find the option which suits your own situation.
- Look into AECS options, there is a cost to applying but there are also benefits. Look at the "Four-point plan".
- There are changes to forestry planting grants ahead, if you are interested in planting do not put off contacting the forestry commission.

"Dealing with a full blown MV outbreak has without question given me a renewed respect for achieving full MV Accredited status and I would urge fellow scheme members not to treat that very privileged status lightly". Scott Brown

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

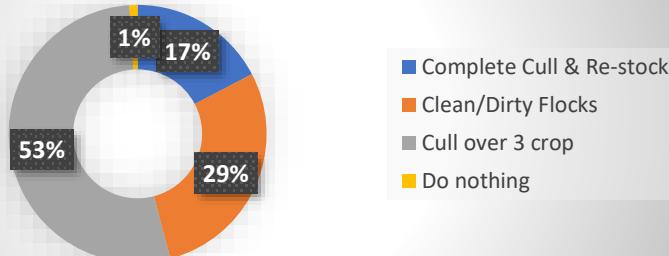
Lynn Gibson gave an informative talk on the issues surrounding MV and other iceberg diseases. Scott Brown from the management group also shared his experience of having dealt with an MV outbreak in the past. More detail of these can be found in the annexes. The majority of discussion centred on the potential to control MV within the Whitriggs flock. With five options being discussed.

1. Cull and Restock
2. Partial Cull/test and cull
3. Test and run clean and dirty flocks
4. Over 3 crop cull
5. Do nothing

The group discussed and voted on their recommendation (see below). Due to the scale of this decision the Mitchell family will take this on board but will make their own decision with the help of their vet.



Group Recommended Action



Cull over 3 crop ewes

Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less expensive, not the emotional issue of losing all breeding stock • Reducing exposure for remaining animals, less stress due to more extensive • Still a closed flock, allows system to remain in place • Options for change of enterprise mix 	Drawbacks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still have positive animals in the flock • Reduction in flock size • Length of time to go clean • Losing older animals with potential resistance • Overheads and fixed costs will remain the same but with less output.
Financial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cull around 200 ewes, provides income of around £12,000 • Loss of lamb sales (170%) could be £27,200 of income lost • Ongoing annual testing £38 for test plus vet time 	Practical issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should hoggs be lambed to reduce lost income? • Field boundaries – double fence? • Testing process • How quick do we want to get back to initial numbers?

As part of the discussion both farm vet Andrew Robinson and Lynn Gibson urged the group to consider testing a batch of 12 older ewes in their flock. The Monitor Farm project have offered to pay for the testing for up to 20 flocks. Any of the group who are interested should contact Stephen Young for more information.

FARMERS UPDATE

Stuart gave an update on the recent developments at Whitriggs, the main highlights are below.

- Cattle all scanned, 87% in calf, bulls were only in for 6 weeks so as expected
- Empty cows sold
- Sheep being scanned on the 12th January
- Final 100 lambs will go away this week through Farmstock.
- Fodder stocks look to be sufficient to get through winter.
- MV had been confirmed in the flock after blood tests and follow up post mortems on old ewes

FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

Example Costs of MV 1600 head flock

	MV infected flock 150% lambing percentage 10% mortality	Typical flock assuming 3% adult mortality and 180% lambing
Loss of income from adult cull	£6000	£1800
Carcass disposal	£2250	£675
Replacement costs	£16,000	£5000
Reduced lamb sales	£20,250	
Total cost	£44,500	£7475

- Basic costing (based on 2010) and does not take into account labour, reduced lamb growth or treatment costs. Replacement cost per breeding female=£100 per head
Replacement cost per tup = £500 per head
Value of lamb sold= £45.00 per head
Potential total cost (vs typical): £37,025 per annum ongoing
- As part of the AECS four point plan an estimated potential value of FYM nutrients at Whitriggs is over £7,000

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Opportunity to use the MV situation to look at the enterprise mix on the farm
- There is no easy or cost neutral way of dealing with the issue, there are however options available
- Woodland management to be looked at for potential increase in income
- Look to take advantage of the AECS opportunities

ACTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Decision to be made on response to MV issues
- Continue work on feasibility of Deer farming and update for group
- Group member to speak to vets re MV testing and Stephen Young if they wish to be part of group testing scheme.

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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