

## ABOUT BORDERS MONITOR FARM

<b>Farm name</b>	<b>Whitriggs, Denholm, TD9 8QR</b>
<b>Meeting Number</b>	<b>15 – Silage quality (Robert Gilchrist) Johne's George Caldow SAC and Colostrum management (Bridget Girvan MSD)</b>
<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019</b>
<b>Next Meeting</b>	<b>Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019</b>

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;** Currently 1000 Easy Care and Blackface lambs on a B&B basis. Future flock is under review.

**Arable;** 28ha of Wheat & Oats fed to cattle, 30ha of spring barley to be sown 2019

**Deer;** 125 Red Hinds due to calf in 2019, with a further 30 calves which will calf in 2020. Currently planning on building to 215 hinds, close herd and breed own replacements.

**Management Team;** Andrew Tullie (Chair), Robert Catlin, Scott Girvan, Giles Henry, Megan Mabon, Andrew Robinson (Vet) and Jonny Williams.

Around 45 farmers and trade attended at Whitriggs followed by the Auld Cross Keys in Denholm to take part in discussions with a top- class range of speakers. The aim of the meeting was to look at the Whitriggs silage plans, how much it costs to make silage and how to measure the cost: benefit of multiple cuts vs a large single cut. The discussion on Johne's also centred on the Mitchells having entered the High Health Scheme for their cattle and methods to reduce and manage the instances of Johne's within the herd. Prior to calving and lambing it was also timely to discuss the benefits of colostrum management as well as methods to ensure calves and lambs are given the best start possible.

## KEY MESSAGES

- Work out and understand the cost of production of silage. It is generally a cheap source of feed, but if you don't know how much it costs you can't make decisions
- Sample each batch of silage as there may be differences, again you cannot formulate a ration if you don't know what forage you are feeding, and it will vary from year to year.
- The importance of effective colostrum management cannot be overemphasised. If disease occurs in young lambs or calves the first point to assess should be colostrum management
- Ensuring successful passive transfer in lambs and calves, with good hygiene, is a key measure to reduce unnecessary and prophylactic (blanket) use of antibiotics on farm
- Put in place a health plan to address the requirements of the Johne's disease risk level programme
- Test all animals of two years of age and older.

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

### Silage – Robert Gilchrist

In most livestock enterprises silage is critical, it makes up 6 months of feeding with only one or two chances to get it right. Weather timings, quality and quantity of grass can all have an effect. At Whitriggs currently silage is made into 2 pits, one for breeding cattle at Denholm Hill and one for young stock, deer and potentially fattening cattle and sheep at Whitriggs. All of the silage kit is owned, including a forage wagon, mower and rake. This means that multiple cuts of silage are possible with minimal extra cost and with control over timing. The current cost of silage making is shown below.



Robert Gilchrist discusses silage quality and cattle rationing

	Cow silage	Youngstock silage
Rental value (£/ha)	£200	£200
Reseed and lime (annual charge) (£/ha)	£100	£121
Rolling (£/ha)	£20	£20
Fertiliser (£/ha)	£80	£80
Fertiliser spread (£/ha)	£7.50	£7.50
Mowing (£/ha)	£25	£50
Tedding & Raking (£/ha)	£20	£40
Conserving (£/ha)	£38	£76
Total (£/ha)	£491	£595
Yield (t/ha)	20	21
Cost/t (£)	£24.53	£28.31
DM%	35%	35%
Cost/t DM (£)	£70.07	£80.88
Cost/kg DM (£)	£0.07	£0.08
Utilised (10% pit wastage)	£0.07	£0.09
Silage ME (MJ/kgDM)	10.3	12
Cost/MJ ME (p)	0.76	0.75

Smelling silage is important to get an understanding of how well it has been made.

- Tobacco smell is a sign that the silage has heated and burned its own energy
- Chip shop smell in silage is a sign of acetic acid and affects intakes

Silage should be a maximum of 40% dry matter for optimum intakes, if it is too dry it is harder to roll out air and this can be poorly fermented. Robert discussed the current feeding groups at Whitriggs and whether they were getting the right diet for their needs.

- It's all about a happy rumen and feeding the bugs
- Is Urea wheat the right feed for grazing cattle?
- Too starchy and cattle will stand still when put out to grass
- Rumen takes 21 days to adjust from one diet to another
- Replacement heifers will be getting too fat and laying down mammary tissue which compromises lifetime milk yield
- Urea wheat replaced with barley and soya allows more option to balance the diet
- Consider fodder crops
- Grass uses 2.5kgN per day
- Work up and down the pit when feeding

#### **Johne's disease- , George Caldow - SAC**

George highlighted the need to control Johne's, which first appeared over 20 years ago, firstly this was an issue in pedigree cattle but is now very much a commercial cattle issue. This is getting worse due to intensification, more cattle being housed, and the weight of cows. It is generally 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> calvers which go down. Bi-annual testing is the best way to control, with anything heavily positive being culled. Testing should be done 2 months before calving, with everything over 2 yrs. old tested.



George Caldow discusses Johne's disease

Cleanliness is crucial to control, clean bedding and out of sheds where possible. The disease is spread through dung and ingested orally, if a cow is heavily infected then the calf will be born with the disease.

Both sheep and cattle are at risk, thin ewes should be killed and tested for OPA, MV & Johne's at the same time. There are five levels of Johne's Risk accreditation

**Level 1:** There have been three clear annual herd tests. This is the lowest level of risk.

**Level 2:** There has a current clear herd test, but has not yet gained level 1 status.

**Level 3:** At the most recent herd test there are reactors in the herd at the level of three percent or fewer.

**Level 4:** There has been more than three percent reactors at its most recent herd test.

**Level 5:** Those herds without a health plan for Johne's disease and that do not adhere to the mandatory elements of the health plan are Risk Level 5. This is the highest level of risk and additionally applies to herds that carry out no testing.

[https://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120112/premium\\_cattle\\_health\\_scheme/658/information\\_on\\_diseases/5](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120112/premium_cattle_health_scheme/658/information_on_diseases/5)

## Colostrum Management – Bridget Girvan, MSD

Bridget is highlighted the importance of colostrum in both lambs and calves, she has also drafted an information sheet alongside this report, the key points are below.

- The importance of effective colostrum management cannot be overemphasised. If disease occurs in young lambs or calves the first point to assess should be colostrum management
- Use close observation to identify lambs or calves at risk of Failure of Passive Transfer (FPT), and intervene to supply adequate volumes of good quality maternal colostrum in a hygienic manner as soon as possible
- *Maternal colostrum of good quality from your farm* will always be the first choice for feeding new-born lambs or calves at risk of FPT
- Ensure all collection and feeding equipment for colostrum is kept as clean as possible, making every effort to minimise contamination of colostrum before and during the feeding process.
- Ensuring successful passive transfer in lambs and calves, with good hygiene, is a key measure to reduce unnecessary and prophylactic (blanket) use of antibiotics on farm
- #colostrumisgold!

There are 5 Q's which should be remembered when it comes to colostrum management:

- ✓ Quickly
- ✓ Quality
- ✓ Quantity
- ✓ sQueaky Clean
- ✓ Quantify

## FARMERS UPDATE

### Stuart & Kate on tour

- Since the last meeting we haven't been as busy on farm as normal.
- Stuart & Kate on honeymoon in NZ, 4 weeks, 15 farms and 1 abattoir visited.
- Scale ranging from part time farms, to 10,000-plus head of deer.
- Income from venison, velvet & trophy stags. Currently the UK is focussed on venison.

### At Home

- At home Robert & Lesley have kept on top of winter routines, also completed the deer handling system
- Robert has undertaken a deer handling & health training course
- Robert & Lesley have also been attending QMS "Better Grazing" group, looking at soil nutrients
- Decision has been made not to re-stock with sheep at this point, rather to retain B&B sheep for now and see how the market reacts to potential Brexit uncertainty.

Organic conversion is under serious consideration again, now the deer enterprise is underway there is more time to investigate this.

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- If Johne's can be brought under control, there may be a premium for breeding stock
- Challenge to understand fully economics and health issues with bringing in B&B sheep.
- Challenge of bringing young people into the industry, work needed to make it an attractive proposition.

## ACTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Decision needed on whether to enter organic conversion
- Further bedding in of deer enterprise
- Find out more about apprenticeship schemes

## FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

- Studies show calves of cows with Johne's wean 20kg or £50 less and if shedding it then £150 less
- Testing costs around £8/cow, or equivalent for the cost of 1 cull in a 100-cow herd.
- A recent study of 86 farms across the UK showed that 1 in 3 beef calves did not receive adequate colostrum
- American studies have shown that beef calves with FPT are 2.5 times more likely to die in the first 4 months, 1.6-3 times more likely to be treated prior to weaning, and weigh on average 3.35kg less at 205 days

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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