

## ABOUT THIS MONITOR FARM

<b>Farm name</b>	Whitriggs, Denholm, TD9 8QR
<b>Meeting Number</b>	18 –EID use within the farming system & Future Farm Policy
<b>Meeting Date</b>	Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> September 2019
<b>Next Meeting</b>	Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Whitriggs Farm** – Situated near Denholm, the farm is run by Robert and Lesley Mitchell along with their son Stuart and additional support from Stuart's brother, Alistair, within busy periods. The Mitchells currently farm 442 hectares of mainly semi-permanent and permanent grassland.

**Deer** - 300 Red Hinds, with a further 30 calves which will calf in 2020. Currently planning on building to 300 close herd and breed own replacements.

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

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

**Sheep** – The sheep have been sold off the farm at Whitriggs.

**Management Group:** Andrew Tullie (Chair), Robert Catlin, Scott Girvan, Giles Henry, Megan Mabon, Andrew Robinson(Vet), Jonny Williams



## KEY MESSAGES

- Using EID within the various farming systems
- The future opportunity of Ultra High Frequency tags (UHF) across all livestock sectors, Particular focus in the beef sector
- Potential to do away with cattle passports
- Ability to read multiple tags through one point and at a further distance
- What next for a monitor farm – Duncan McAllister update as previous monitor farm participant
- The potential of tourism incorporated at Whitriggs – Holiday cottage/deer attraction
- Consolidation in the short-term has been the groups recommendation Whitriggs

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

### David Kerr – SCOTEID - Electronic Identification

**David Kerr** from ScottEID gave a presentation on the future use of Ultra High Frequency (UHF) tags across the livestock sectors, focusing on the development of EID use in cattle systems. The indications from Scottish Government are that EID will be compulsory for the Cattle sector by 2021.

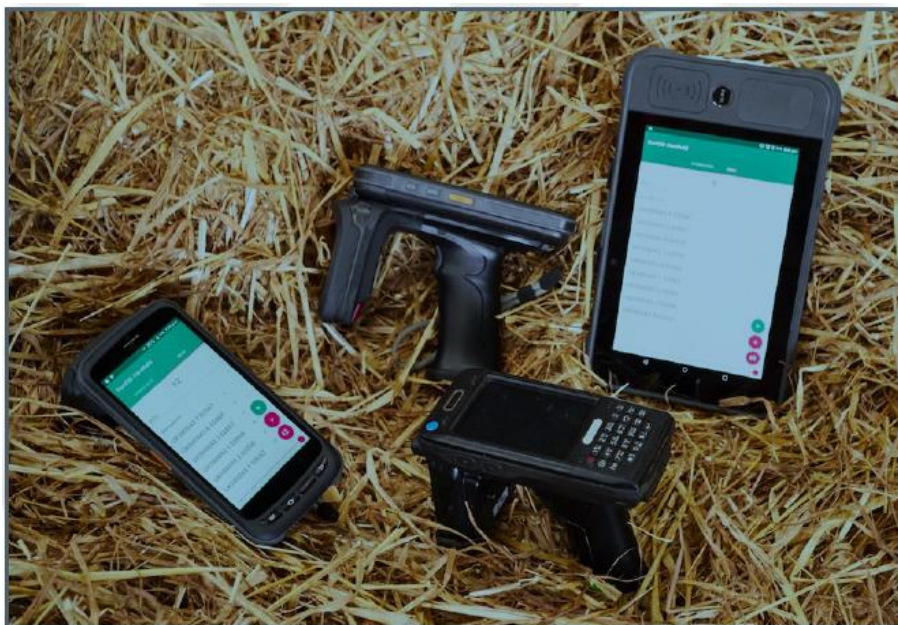
Low Frequency (LF) has been used over many years especially within the sheep sector and was made compulsory in 2010. The use of LF is limited in a few ways; read range max 80cm, limited memory capability on each individual tag – restricted to just the UK herd number and individual ID, 30-year-old technology. It has however, proven useful for individual animal recording within the sheep sector.

The use of boluses has been discussed but complications with the boluses migrating through the animal's body over time, prove difficult for the abattoirs to locate them increasing the risk of the boluses continuing into the food chain.

UHF tags have the ability to store more memory on each individual chip than LF tags. This could provide an opportunity to get rid of Cattle passports if the information can be stored on the tag. Due to the length of the Cattle ID number, it is currently too long to be stored on an LF tag. Further improvements include the read range, spanning anywhere between 5mm up to 7 meters and the ability to read multiple animal tags simultaneously which increases on-farm efficiency by reading batches of animals at once.

To show how the UHF tags work and fit into everyday farming situations, David Kerr gave a practical demonstration of the tags being used. David had set up an aerial above a gateway in a handling system at the farm which was linked to a monitor and read several young steers with UHF tags as they ran through the gateway. It demonstrated the time saving efficiency and the ability of the readers to pick up multiple tags passing one point and how easy it would be incorporated in a practical farm handling system. At Whitriggs, the benefits it would bring within the deer handling systems was voiced. The nature and design of the deer handling system is proving difficult with LF tags. By having a more advance read range there would be little need to be in close proximity of the deer which would reduce stress on the animals and improve overall health and safety whilst providing valuable management data.

From the discussion from David, the recent developments in the use of EID shows how it can be used as a more accurate and efficient management tool across all multiple farming enterprises. Further discussion showed the potential UHF tags could provide to various other areas in the agricultural industry such as, marts and abattoirs and potentially haulers, providing real time traceability of animals as they progress throughout the supply chain.



*Various Handheld Readers for UHF*

especially



## Duncan McAllister – Glenbarr Farms – Past Kintyre Monitor Farmer

Duncan McAllister gave a presentation on his experience being involved within the monitor farm process and what changes were achieved during and after the 3 years as a host monitor farmer in Kintyre.

Duncan expressed the benefits of changing several aspects of the farming system. He reduced stocking rates to help mitigate ground compaction and introduced a grazing management plan to better utilise grass. Within the grassland management plan, soil analysis and rotational grazing was incorporated.

Duncan explained that it is important when incorporating new ideas within the business that you build on them in a way that suits your farming system. When implementing the rotational grazing system Duncan had to remain flexible and find what worked for his farm as this new system was introduced.

The sheep enterprise altered with a change in breed of sheep to allow for a later lambing, resulting in a more profitable sheep enterprise.

In addition to the various changes Duncan made within the livestock enterprises on the farm he also invested in renewable energy with a wind farm. He spoke about the long-term investment and the challenges in building a wind farm but also mentioned the benefits renewable energy projects can provide for the farm and the local community.

Duncan has been out of the monitor farm program for five years and finds the support and experience beneficial in progressing his farm business and pushing him to continue to look for new opportunities like renewables. The discussion turned to the positives the group have found from being involved in Whitriggs monitor farm. The group had found the meetings not only informative but a way to meet new people and discuss the business opportunities and develop ideas through the support of the project. The group voiced the benefits of engaging with different mindsets through the meetings and being able to engage with farmers they may not have normally have got the chance to meet.



## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

### Going forward at Whitriggs

- Continued development within the deer enterprise
- Looking at going into Organic – application submitted
- Over the next 5-10 year - potential investment into holidays cottages on the farm
- How tourism could be incorporated within the business
- Future challenges will continue to be around the development of Brexit and the future trade deals with particular focus on the beef sector.

## ACTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Consolidation of the changes made at Whitriggs Farm and what the future may hold going forward.

## FARMERS UPDATE

Stuart gave a detailed update on progress since the last meeting with a full version of the update available on the hub.

### Deer

- All animals through the handling system
- Yearlings received a bolus and new yearling received a wormer for lungworm
- Calves were weaned from the 2-year-old hinds along with being tagged and sex count
- New stags have been purchased and introduced with the hinds
- Fencing continues



### Cattle

- Bulls separated from cows after 6 weeks with the bulls in with the heifers removed 25 days after AI
- Heifers scanned 32 in calf out of the 37, achieving the target of 6 or less empty. Cows to be done Oct/Nov with a target of 90% in calf
- Empty heifers and cull cows sold at UA Stirling 25<sup>th</sup> September
- Store cattle all sold end of August (UA) averaged 192p/kg after commission - 66 Bullocks 33 Heifers
- All calves have been vaccinated for pneumonia with bovipast
- The Cattle Outwintering Project has been set up on the Hill. Silage Bales now in place.

### Arable

- Due to the weather this season has been more of struggle
- Extra winter grain going in this year due to better yields and an earlier harvest
- Winter Oats 7.8t/h – 72t Straw
- Winter Barley 6.6t/h – 65t Straw
- Spring Oats 5.5t/h – 86t Straw
- Extra Silage produced of high clover +58 bales

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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