

ABOUT LOCHABER MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Strone Farm, Lochaber Monitor Farm, Banavie, Fort William, PH33 7PB
Meeting Number	13 – Grassland Management & Weed Control
Meeting Date	Thursday 13 Jun 2019
Next Meeting	T.B.C.

Strone Farm is run by Chris and Malcolm Cameron as a family partnership and in total the business farms 1,788 hectares.

Cattle: 40 Limousin cows producing store calves.

Cows are in-wintered.

Sheep: 500 Cheviot ewes, producing store lambs.

Mainly Lleyn tups and hoggs kept as replacements.

Ewes lambed away.

Management Group: James Colston (Chair) John MacAulay, Paolo Berardelli, Peter Kennedy, and Ewen Campbell



2018 Reseed ready for first cut silage



Group photo in rush infested field

Aim of Meeting:

- Decide how newly sown grass should be managed to prolong sward longevity
- Discuss how to manage problem /weedy fields to improve grass yields
- Look at best use of fields for 2019

KEY MESSAGES

The key messages delivered from this meeting were:

- Fertiliser & lime applications should be based on routine soil analysis. In Lochaber this should be done at least every 3years or when a field is going to be re seeded.
- Prioritise expenditure on high value fields. In lower value grazing fields, simple management such as spreading dung and lime (when required) can be much more cost effective than reseeding and applying expensive fertiliser and give acceptable levels of productivity.
- When planning a reseed choose a grass seed mixture which is suitable for your needs (usually late cutting followed by grazing in Lochaber). Post establishment, poaching, under grazing, nutrient deficiencies and deteriorated pH will reduce the life span of the new grass.

- Spraying & wiping weeds is an effective form of control but is a quick fix. Addressing the route of the problem (low pH, nutrient deficiency, grazing management) will help achieve long term control of weeds.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Fackies Field

In conjunction with Watson Seeds, the monitor farm have undertaken a grassland reseed trial. The field is 11 acres and has been reseeded with four different grass seed mixes. The grasses have been selected to trial their growth potential and longevity on a west coast farm.

The first mix, Duart, has been planted on 8 acres of the field and the remaining 3 mixes are in 1 acre blocks.



Duart plus permanent clover plus 2kg of Westerwold.

Kilos in mix	Grass	Type	% in Mix
1.80	Abergreen	Intermediate (Dip)	12.00
2.50	Aberchoice	Late (Dip)	16.67
2.00	Astonchieftain	Late (Dip)	13.33
4.00	Foxtrot	Late (Dip)	26.67
1.50	Abergain	Late (Tet)	10.00
2.00	Kintyre	Late (Tet)	13.33
1.20	Cast Rotational clover Blend	White clover blend-cutting-	8.00
2.00	Westerwold		
17.00	Total		

Very uniform heading mixture due to high percentage of Late PRG. Will produce a very dense sward.

Herbal Ley

Kilos in mix	Grass	% in Mix
0.35	Alice White clover	2.33
0.81	ALTASWEDE RED CLOVER	5.40
0.46	AURORA ALSIKE CLOVER	3.07
0.35	Birdsfoot trefoil	2.33
1.15	Burnet	7.67
1.73	Diceros Cocksfoot	11.53
0.23	Endurance ribgrass	1.53
0.70	Comer Timothy	4.67
0.58	LIHEROLD MEADOW FESCUE	3.87
0.58	Masterpiece Tall Fescue	3.87
0.35	Merwi white clover Medium	2.33
1.74	Perun Festololium	11.60
1.33	Abergreen iprg	8.87

0.80	puna 11 cichory		5.33
2.31	Sainforn		15.40
0.28	Sheeps Parsley		1.87
0.10	Yarrow Forage Herb		.66
1.15	Sweet clover yellow blossom		7.67

Special Hermitage Cocksfoot added, and Timothy reduced.

Kilos in mix	Grass	Type	% in Mix
1.00	Hymer	Hybrid (Tet)	6.67
1.50	Boyne	Intermediate (Dip)	10.00
2.00	Rodrigo	Intermediate (Dip)	13.33
2.60	foxtrot	Late (Dip)	17.33
1.00	kintyre	Late (Tet)	6.67
2.60	twymax	Late (Tet)	17.33
1.00	comer	Timothy	6.67
0.40	miracle	SS Meadow Grass	2.67
1.00	herald	Strong Creeping Red Fescue	6.67
1.00	Diceros	Cocksfoot	6.67
0.90	permanent clover blend	White clover blend-grazing-	6.00

This mixture has been successful on wet heavy soils, for intensive sheep grazing.

Fyvie special with plantain and chicory

Kilos in mix	Grass	Type	% in Mix
1.00	Aberwolf	Intermediate (Dip)	6.25
1.00	Rodrigo	Intermediate (Dip)	6.25
1.00	Astonbonus	Intermediate (Tet)	6.25
4.00	Foxtrot	Late (Dip)	25.00
1.00	Abergain	Late (Tet)	6.25
2.60	Twymax	Late (Tet)	16.25
0.60	Comer	Timothy	3.75
1.40	Permanent clover blend	White clover blend-grazing-	8.75
0.40	Tonic ribwort plantain		2.50
1.00	Chichory		6.25
2.00	Abereve	Hybrid (Tet)	12.50

Developed for soils prone to drought. Has a high percentage of Tetraploid, which is aggressive tall and leafy combined with deep rooting Chicory and Ribwort plantain.

To date, this field has been managed by

- 1t /acre of lime applied in 2017
- 3t / acre of lime applied in 2019
- All dung from both cattle sheds spread over the field in Spring 2019
- Field ploughed and seed sown on 12th June 2019.

The group discussed how best to manage this field to ensure the grass has optimum establishment and to prolong the longevity.

It was agreed that this field should be cut for silage this year (in about 10 weeks) followed by light grazing by sheep (or cattle if conditions allow).

By cutting for silage before grazing, it will allow the roots to grow as well as the grass. When young grass is grazed, it encourages tillering but it also tends to be more shallow rooted. This is due to the grass continually trying to grow and flower rather than rooting.

Another positive impact on cutting the new grass is that it will increase the clover content naturally by allowing light to reach the clover plants.

It was agreed that 0:20:30 fertiliser should be applied to the seed bed ASAP. This is vital as phosphate is needed for root development. Once the crop reaches 4-6 inches in length, Nitrogen fertiliser can be applied to boost growth.

FARMERS UPDATE

- Lambing complete and very pleased as lambing percentage was over 100% for the first time.
- 12 Calves sold in May to average 233p/kg which was an increase of 13p/kg from the January sale.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

A 'grazing only' field at Clunes was visited to assess the possibility / need of a backend reseed.

The aspiration for this field is for it to produce a higher yield of better quality grass in for it to be grazed in the summer cows with calves at foot. Currently the field is capable of summering dry cows only.

Challenges raised:

- In the past, Chris & Malcolm have found when dung is spread on top of the grass it causes a 'pan'. Works best on Strone when dung is incorporated into the soil
- Due to grazing requirements, the field cannot be reseeded in the spring as they need the grass

Proposed Action Plan:

- Soil sample the field ASAP to assess pH and nutrient levels & address deficiencies
- Spread dung and if it appears not to be breaking down, use the aerator to help



FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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