

## LOTHIANS MONITOR FARM

Farm name **Prestonhall & Saughland, Pathhead, Midlothian**

Meeting Number **14 – “Livestock Focus” – techno grazing, fodder beet and agri -environment**

Meeting Date **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019**

Next Meeting **Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

Prestonhall Farms and Saughland Farm independently run arable and livestock enterprises at Pathhead Midlothian. Pete Eccles is farm manager at Saughland and Bill Gray at Prestonhall. The businesses work collaboratively on arable operations. Livestock at Saughland; 65 AAX suckler cows running with Lim & Hereford bull plus 2,300 Chev, Lley, Aberfield, Mule ewes with Tex, NZsuff, Abermax lambs at foot on rotational grazing system. Arable at Prestonhall; Combinable Crops, WW 175ha, WB 80ha, SB 160ha, WOSR 65ha, WO 20ha, Grass 75ha.

**The management group** is chaired by Willie Thomson and includes Jill Bathgate, Russell Calder, Andrew Clark, Rob Forrest, James Hamilton, Ross King, Graham Lofthouse, James Logan and David Paul

Community Group Chairman Graham Lofthouse welcomed 30 Livestock farmers to the Monitor Farm Spring meeting at Saughland. Graham explained that, the management group had decided to split the May meetings and run separate Livestock and Arable focussed meetings to allow more time to concentrate on the individual sectors.

### KEY MESSAGES

#### Thomas Stobart – Technograzing

- Farmers need to get more from the resources available
- Mindset and System changes may be required
- Fertiliser costs have come down by 60%
- Purchased Feed costs have come down by 40%
- Livestock Output has increased by 34%
- Combined Savings of £29k
- Increased Output of £48k

#### Key profit drivers:

- Kgs of dry matter grown/grazed
- Increased length of grazing season
- Maximizing farm grass growth from less N
- Ease of management

#### Saughland Fodder Beet 2018/2019

- Varieties – Blaze and Blizzard
- Establishment Costs - £650/ha
- Yield 100t/ha Fresh weight - Dry Matter 20%
- Cost of Production 3.25p/kg/DM
- Equivalent to 22t/acre of 35% DM Silage



## Agri- Environment Schemes

- Need to be more flexible and less prescriptive
- LMO Menu type scheme would deliver wider benefits
- Combining Agri-environment and Animal Health priorities must be key

## Cattle Away Wintering Project

- Profit after all cost £55/head or £2,420 for no extra work

## Smart Grass Trial

- Ashgill - 7-year sward benefit – 831kg/DM
- Crichton Dean – 1-year sward benefit – 520kg/DM

## Saughland Lambing & Calving 2019

- Lamb losses scanning to marking 2019 12.5% (2018 15.9%)
- Calving 69 Live calves out of 75 cows & Heifers (92%)



## Thomas Stobart – Farmer, Technograzier, GrasscheckGB pilot farm

Thomas Stobart farms in the hills of cumbria in partnership with his brother Jimmy, running 800 ewes with all lambs finished on a Tesco 'cost of production' contract, 210 Wagyu cattle are also reared on contract across 730ha of which 60ha is owned and 670ha is rented. The brothers also run a contract shearing business to generate some off farm income.

The Stobarts run a 93ha paddock and a technograzng system on their best land. In the tehnograzing system, the fields are split into cells within lanes where a lead and chase wire are used to allow the correct allocation of grass and to maximise grass utilisation.



Since implementing the grazing system and ultizing grass more efficiently, the business performance has improved significantly. The fertiliser costs have come down by £7k, Purchased feeds by £22k and output has increased by £48k.

The table below shows the costs savings and increased output since 2013.

Year	2013	2014	2018	2013- 2018 £ Change	% Change
<b>Fertiliser Costs</b>	£11,512	£11,237	£4,567	-£6,855	-60%
<b>Purchased Feed Costs</b>	£37,572	£19,150	£15,160	-£22,412	-40%
<b>Total Livestock Income</b>	£139,885	£147,818	£188,105	+£48,220	+34%

## Saughland Fodder Beet

Fodder Beet has been grown in Scotland for many decades and with some encouragement from the community group Peter sowed 6.5ha in summer 2018. The afternoon session reviewed the 2018/2019 Saughland Fodder Beet performance which proved to work well through the winter and provided a valuable feed source for the ewes. The group accepted that the weather conditions had been favourable but regardless both varieties (Blaze and Blizzard) had performed well.

### Utilisation

- 35% lifted before Christmas
- stored outdoors for 7 weeks
- 1000 ewes strip grazed remainder from second week in January with 1kg DM per day
- Continual access to silage.
- 300 twins remained until Mid-March
- 90% of crop utilised

Area Grown	6.5ha
Establishment Costs	£650/ha
Yield	100t/ha (Fresh Weight)
Dry Matter	20t/ha
Cost of Production	3.25p/kg DM
Comparable – Feed Barley	20p/kg DM
Silage Equivalent	71 Bales/ha (22t/acre) @ 35% DM

### Benefits

- Inexpensive source of energy
- Filled the nutrition gap (Jan/Feb)
- Little waste
- Ewes ate grubbed up fodder beet
- Ewes Loved it
- So far, no evidence of broken mouths
- Great energy source but low in protein



## Saughland - Agri-Environment Scheme – Sandra Stewart

The afternoon session on farm incorporated the livestock and Agri-Environment discussions. Saughland has been successful in a collaborative AECS application and Peter carries out the capital works this summer. There was unanimous support for Agri-environmental management schemes during the discussion but there is a concern regarding the lack of flexibility in the scheme rules and the competitive nature of the current application process. The group feel that a more pragmatic approach and menu of options which are open to all farm businesses, similar to the old LMO scheme, would allow all farmers to access some funding and deliver wider environmental benefit.

Peter explained that he is seeking a variation to his scheme which required the hedges to be moved to the external boundaries of the farm to provide further bio-security which also integrates and compliments the animal health priorities on the farm. The group agreed that this approach would be much more sensible as the scheme would be delivering both the environment and animal health benefits.

## FARMERS UPDATE

Peter updated the group with the 2019 lambing and calving figures. Calving has been disappointing with 69 live calves out of 75 cows (2 cows aborted 1 @ 7months & twins @ 8.5mths, 1 dead twin, 1 Watery belly, 1 lay on). Lambing has been better with total losses from scanning to marking of 12.5% in the ewes which compares to 15.9% in 2018.

The 'Smart grass' trial produced good results with the Ashgill field (7-year sward) producing 831kg/DM/ha more than the untreated area and the Crichton Dean (1-year sward) producing 520kg/DM/ha additional grass. The application cost is roughly £32/ha which equates to a cost of 4-6p per kg of DM produces which compares with purchased concentrates at 27p/kg/DM. In Spring 2019, it appears that smart grass has worked well and provided cost effective additional grazing. 'Smartgrass' contains gibberellic acid, a natural growth hormone that increases plant cell size.

## FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

### Saughland – Cattle Away Wintering Collaborative Project

As part of the wider collaboration project Peter away wintered his store cattle with Robert Fleming on a profit share arrangement where the cattle were valued at the beginning of the project and valued at the end with Peter having the option to buy the cattle back or sell them in the spring. The table shows the proposed and the actual cattle performance. The business received £730/head after all wintering costs were deducted which equated to £55/head more than they would have been valued in October. Peter has made £2,420 on the 44 cattle for no extra work and it was evident on the sale day that the grazed cattle were sought after as they did not require a transition period when put back to grass.

Winter 2018/2019	Proposed		Actual	
	Unit Value	Per Head	Unit Value	Per Head
Arrival Date	01/11/2018		01/11/2018	
Payment/kg weighed	£1.65/kg	£396	£1.65/kg	£506.55
Saughland Retained Vale	£0.55/kg	£132	£0.55/kg	£169
Sale Date	15/05/2019		24/04/2019	
Days on Farm	195		174	
Days Housed	120		0	
Days Grazed	75		174	
Arrival Weights (kgs)	240kg		307kg	
Sale Weights (kgs)	396kg		415.34kg	
Weight Gain (kgs)	156		108	
Sale Price	£2.50/kg		£2.35/kg	
<b>Sale Total (£)</b>	<b>£940</b>	<b>£940</b>	<b>£976.36</b>	<b>£976.36</b>
<b>Costs</b>				
Housing Costs		£198		£81
Grazing Costs		£48.75		£42.90
Charge (Admin)		£15		£15
Haulage		£13		£13
<b>Total Costs</b>		<b>£274.75</b>		<b>£153.90</b>
<b>Margin (sale Total – Total Costs)</b>		<b>£137.25</b>		<b>£146.91</b>
Commission		-£35.25		-£36.61
<b>50% Profit</b>		<b>£51</b>		<b>£55.15</b>
<b>Transfer Value + Profit</b>		<b>£579</b>		<b>£730.70</b>
<b>Total Added Value Achieved</b>			<b>£2,420</b>	<b>£55</b>

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Agri-environment Scheme implementation and future menu LMO type menu schemes

## ACTIONS

Next Meeting – Friday 19th July

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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