

ABOUT LOTHIAN'S MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Prestonhall & Saughland, Pathhead, Midlothian
Meeting Number	04 – Collaborative Project, Market Updates, End of season performance review
Meeting Date	Thursday 5 th October 2017
Next Meeting	Thursday 9 th November 2017

KEY MESSAGES

Arable

- Weather made harvest 2017 challenging (and everyone now on back foot) but yields are up on 2016
- A crop has its optimum potential when sitting in the bag, minimising loss of potential determines yield
- Current and “live” harvest/crop performance data helps make informed decisions



Livestock

- Cattle performance is good in general, having “live” data is valuable
- Flexible marketing options = respond to market opps, market cattle at the right time (LimX sold store & HerefordX finished was the correct decision)
- Transition from grass to stubble turnips must be managed carefully to help rumen bugs

Collaboration - Stubble turnips

- Getting arable and livestock farmers discussing issues in the same field is key
- Stubble turnips well established – good biomass from an arable perspective but could do with more bulb on turnips from a livestock perspective
- Ideally ready to graze early November; lambs moved to the adjacent grass field too early
- Lambs short of grass -strip graze - gradual introduction to minimise change to rumen

FARMERS UPDATE

Livestock (Saughland): The lambs and calves are weaned and the weather made hay making impossible but they do have 1000 bales of silage. Big difference thanks to forage rape and turnips and some nitrogen applied to grassland in September. The Limousin cattle were sold store and the Herefords sold finished in the last few weeks.

Arable (Prestonhall): Rainfall figures for June, July, August and September made harvest very challenging and now they are on the back foot with sowing. All yields were up on the year but oats slightly disappointing. He also touched on the new biomass boiler and the challenge of getting it in and commissioned by 20th September.

BIOMASS VISIT

The new Herz 995 kW biomass boiler is in place and commissioned at Rosemains and the challenge for the group is to now look into the new grain store facility. With the biomass system in place the challenge for the group is to further assess and identify the best grain store option which will be fit for purpose for the next 20 years and can make best use of the available heat

ARABLE SESSION

The value of having live data was demonstrated during the discussions on what Bill should be planning for next year.

- Bill gave an overview of the arable performance at Prestonhall, and some indicative gross margin figures
- Winter Wheat performance up from 8.84t/ha to 9.02t/ha and gross margin up from £710/ha to £810/ha
- Winter Barley yield up by close to 1t/ha and gross margin up by £17/ha
- Saughland Spring Barley has worked better this year as it all went for malting at £155 against £115 in 2016. Although yield was back from 6.52/ha to 6.18t/ha, total output was up by £208/ha
- Variable costs are down by £50/ha due to less herbicide and nitrogen use
- Spring Barley after turnips was not very successful
- Less disease pressure would have helped yields
- Oilseed Rape – DK Extrovert does well at Prestonhall, not on the recommended list but “bomb proof” in windy conditions.



LIVESTOCK SESSION

Peter had prepared a hand out with performance data for the cattle and sheep enterprises and the group feeling was that the cattle were performing well. In the afternoon the discussion centred on what to do with the fit cows after weaning. The decision was taken by the group to send them back out onto a rough area or land which has potential to last 72 days if strip grazed. With straw looking to be expensive rough calculations suggest this would save up to £80/t on bedding costs.

Finished Cattle

- Market cattle at the right time LimX sold Store HerefordX sold finished was correct decision
- Hereford X sold finished July and September averaging net after deductions £1,281, 345kg/DW at 16months which is 1.29kg/DLWG
- Limousin X sold store 2nd August averaging £1,180 500kg/live weight 14months which is 1.02kg/DLWG
- Concentrate feed costs for finished cattle £3.13/head

Suckler Cows

- The calves have just been weaned and the target weights are 50% of cow weight at 200 days
- 1st calver weaning weights 312kg or 48% of cow weight (648kg)
- Mature Cows weaning weights 308kg or 45% of cow weight (683kg)
- Bullock calves only 363.5kg or 51% of cow weight
- Scanned and results show 5 empty and two sets of twins 96%
- Calves received 62.5kg/head of creep or £12.69/head



The group visited the lambs on Prestonhall where a group of 675 lambs (31-35kg) are running on older grass fields prior to being let into the stubble turnips. The general feeling was that the lambs had moved down too early and were not performing in the older grass. The group valued these lambs at £50 and advised they are gradually introduced the stubble turnips and strip grazed to allow for an easier transition.

Lamb Performance (2017)

- 773 Lambs sold, 18.2kg/DW £74/head
- 75 Ewe lambs sold for breeding £85/head
- 675 lambs moved to Prestonhall (31-35kg), 515 lambs at Saughland (35-40kg) 225
- 225 lightest lambs at Saughland less than 31kg
- 59 recorded lamb deaths since marking 1.9%
- Gimmer sales 48 Suffolk X Mule gimmers £138.50/head & 70 Aberfields @ £141.50
- Ewe lamb sales 70 @ £85



COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

The group visited the stubble turnip field and it quickly became evident that getting arable and livestock farmers discussing issues in the same field is key to making the project work. The stubble turnips are well established and there is plenty leaf and good biomass from an arable perspective but the crop could do with more bulb on turnips from a livestock perspective.

- Bill had used the variable costs plus contractor rates to calculate the establishments costs which came in at £236/ha
- The group accepted that with the benefit of hindsight the lambs would not have gone down to rough grazing until 1st November when hopefully turnips would have developed more bulb mass
- Sowing rate need not have been so dense to allow more space per plant (however, plants who were out by themselves had not done any better either)
- Consensus was that waiting until November to graze would be too long for the lambs and that you should strip graze them in a limited way asap, or they will go back.



FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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