

## ABOUT CORSKIE MONITOR FARM

Farm Name **Corskie Farm, Garmouth, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7NN**

Meeting Number **13 Grazing management (Alex Brewster and Louise Urquhart) and worm control and anthelmintic resistance (Hannah Orr)**

Meeting Date **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

Next Meeting **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

Report Date **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019 (SS)**

Corskie Farm is run by Iain Green in partnership with his mother and father. The family have been farming in the area for over 60 years. Over 1,440 hectares (3,560 acres) in total is currently farmed by the business.

**Arable:** The main arable enterprise consists of growing Spring Barley (535ha) for malting. Winter Wheat (86ha), Winter barley (70ha) and Spring Oats (11ha) are also grown, with the majority being used on-farm as livestock feed.

**Cattle:** The family run 380 cross cow suckler herd, alongside a 200 cow pedigree Simmental herd. Simmental and shorthorn bulls as well as AI is used to spread out calving across the year.

**Sheep:** There are 600 Mules and Mule cross Texel sheep which are lambed in April.

**Pigs:** At Corskie there is an indoor breeding herd of 380 sows, producing breeding gilts for Rattlerow.

*"The different farm enterprises are fairly well integrated," Iain says, "as well as growing our own feed through the cereals side, we also use the manure from the livestock on the arable fields and pasture. We apply it differently in different areas, using our soil and yield maps to make sure we are controlling our inputs and maintaining good soil fertility and nutrient balance."*

### Management Group

Andrew Anderson (Chair), Hugh Thomson, Robbie Newlands, Martin Birse, Robert Manson, Charlie Gray, Cameron MacIver, Ian McHattie, Stewart Grant, Stewart Stronach and Stewart Rothnie.

Stewart Rothnie chaired this community group meeting.

The line-up of guest speakers for the day included:

- Alex Brewster, farmer from Perthshire, owner of Pasture Powered, 2016 Nuffield Scholar and previous QMS Grazing Group host.
- Louise Urquhart, farmer near Lumphanan, owner of Louise's Farm Kitchen and previous QMS Grazing Group host.
- Hannah Orr, SAC Veterinary Services, Aberdeen.



## KEY MESSAGES

### ● Alex Brewster:

- Alex talked about how he has developed and how he manages his grazing system at his own farm in Perthshire using a paddock grazing system.
- Livestock graze a paddock for 2 days and then are moved onto the next paddock. The paddocks have been created to hold 65 cows with their calves, so can still be managed in reasonably sized groups.
- Creating a paddock grazing system has allowed the business to double cow numbers from 100 to 200 in the herd. Calves are achieving 1.3 – 1.5kg DLWG on grass only due to its high feed value. The majority of the feed value is in the top  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the grass plant.
- Alex emphasised how important soil microbiology and organic matter is for improved grassland growth and grazing utilisation.
  - Increased soil organic matter is essential for droughty soils, as the OM is like a sponge holding the water within the soil;
  - Improved root mass helps to advance the resilience of the plants to varied weather patterns/events;



- The growth above the soil directly mirrors what is happening with root growth below the soil;
- Soil microbes are essential to feed grass growth, also improving DLWG/milk yield etc.;
- Increase soil microbes by increasing the diversity of plants grown. Use mixtures of grass with ryegrasses, clovers, chicory and plantain. Alex uses a forage mix with 16 varieties of forage crops within it to help 'feed the microbes', which in turn increases crop yield.
- "Diversity = Resilience = £ in My Pocket".
- Alex is also an advocate for measuring what is happening on-farm, weigh livestock to see how they are performing – this can give you a lot of information and allow you to make tweaks

to the farming system to increase efficiency.

### ● Louise Urquhart:

- Louise told the group about her experience as a QMS grazing group host from 2014 – 2017.
  - The grazing group came at a good time for their business as they were newly into a new tenancy on a farm which had a history of being let out seasonally, therefore the fertility of the land and fencing were in poor heart.
  - Gave them time to stand back and question what they were doing in their business, along with thinking differently and taking on board new advice.
- Some hints/tips and lessons learnt from being part of QMS Grazing Groups project were:
  - Improved grassland management. 'Livestock farmers' often forget that they are really 'grassland farmers', as grassland is the engine behind the livestock enterprises.

- Treat grassland as a crop, manage yields, rather than set stock all year round.
  - Close off grassland during the winter to give yield in the spring.
  - Use technology to monitor what is happening on-farm. Weigh lambs regularly to determine if any management intervention is required, e.g. mineral/worm drench etc.
  - Plan ahead, look to the future and work to the current season (no two are the same!).
- Louise emphasised how working together with other farmers and people within the industry is beneficial to business performance, mental health and personal development.
- Rural Leadership Programme a great boost to confidence in the business and farming sector. Allowed Louise to create many links and business contacts.
- Louise also discussed how her business, Louise's Farm Kitchen, has taken off.
  - After launching in 2016, Louise now processes 3 pigs and 5-10 sheep per week;
  - Regular source of income for the farming business;
  - Social media is very powerful, majority of sales initially through social media. However, keeping it fresh and up to date is time consuming.
  - Louise believes that farmers are the best people to sell their own produce. The passion and direct contact are great for the customer and the farmer for understanding what the public want and also how food is produced.

## ● Hannah Orr:

- Hannah covered the control of worms in cattle and sheep.
- Anthelmintics have their place in treating worms/fluke in livestock, but reliance on them alone is increasingly recognised to put a huge selection pressure on the parasites you are treating and effectively selects for resistance.
- Routinely dosing is no longer considered responsible use of medicines, and plus we need to preserve the efficacy of the drugs we still have in our toolkit.
  - Use worm egg counts to see if dosing is required.
- Draw up a Parasite Control Plan:
  - Identify the risks on pasture/in livestock;
  - Monitor egg counts, growth rates, parasite forecasts (NADIS);
  - Control: treatment/prevention, product choice/timing, avoiding resistance;
  - Treatment strategies: targeted dosing/strategic dosing;
  - Biosecurity: quarantine periods/monitoring for disease.
- Monitor what is happening on-farm and make changes as and when they are required:
  - Take some time at housing and turn-out to reflect on the effectiveness of parasite control in the previous months, and plan for the next six months.
  - Monitor: disease levels, growth rates, FECs, resistance checks.
  - Investigate: PM deaths, FECs if scouring, grazing risk history.
  - Understand: where did the programme fail?, overuse leading to resistance/immunity.
  - Make changes: Use risk forecasts, pasture risk ratings, change farming system
- Hannah directed people at the meeting to look at the NADIS Parasite Forecasts, [www.nadis.org.uk/parasite-forecast](http://www.nadis.org.uk/parasite-forecast), SCOPS, [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk), for Sheep information and COWS, [www.cattleparasites.org.uk](http://www.cattleparasites.org.uk), for cattle information.



## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Around 20 farmers attended the meeting discussing the main topics of soils, grassland and parasite management in cattle/sheep.
- Everyone met in the grain shed at Corskie, where Stewart Rothnie (management group) welcomed everyone to the meeting before handing over to Iain Green for the farm update – details below.
- Alex Brewster, Louise Urquhart and Hannah Orr gave their presentations at Corskie, details above.
- Tour at Innes Estate, the discussion included:
  - Grassland management. Alex Brewster discussed with the group how he would divide the field up to increase productivity and the numbers of cattle that could be grazed on the field.
  - Cow type/size. Optimum cow size/weight. Calf growth rates. Iain discussed how the commercial cattle are managed, the crossing breeding program between SIM and SH.
  - Spring Barley management, soil types, fertiliser, spray program etc.

## FARMERS UPDATE

Iain updated the group on what was happening on the farm, as follows:

- Rainfall from 20<sup>th</sup> May (when it started raining after the dry spell) to today is 172mm – making it difficult to get onto the ground for spraying and silage work.

### Arable/Grassland

- Crops are relatively clean of weeds/disease, despite the weather.
- Due to wet weather there is still 470 acres of Spring Barley to get its first spray.
- Winter Wheat missed its T1 spray due to the weather, yellow rust has been seen in some varieties.
- Rainfall 2019 to date = 226mm, of which 168mm fell within the month of April.
- No further grain has been forward sold since December, last week offering £158/t for malting barley.
- Some areas of Spring Barley are starting to yellow due to the large downpours and continuous rain.
  - Stewart Rothnie, agronomist, added that this is not due to manganese deficiency etc., but because the soil structure has been lost due to the constant wet conditions.
- Silage has been very start/stop due to the weather. 95 acres were cut at Corskie in late May, but nothing has been cut since.

### Cattle

- Preparation is well under way for the Royal Highland Show, 13 Simmentals (10 adults & 3 calves) and a Shorthorn heifer have been entered for the show, along with some Texel lambs.
- Flystrike has been seen and treated in the tail-heads of 2 autumn born calves. Rare to see flystrike in cattle.
- Finished cattle are being sold weekly through Dunbia. Bull beef is sold at approx. 14 months old and are on an ad-lib system, monitored on the Ritchie Beef Monitor. Heifers are also being finished on an ad-lib hopper, in a separate group to the bull beef animals.

### Sheep

- Flystrike causing additional work in the flock, with several sheep needing treatment and clipping.

- The majority of the ewes have now been clipped, although there are still 320 to clip, which were rained off this morning.

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Flystrike causing issues in livestock at present;
- Wet weather disrupting spray applications/timings and silage production.
- Ground conditions are soft, will use lower tyre pressures, where possible, to help reduce compaction and damage to the soil.

## ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- Examine cattle on Beef Monitor system and track weight gains.
- Consider mixed forage crops for this winter to help increase soil microbiology.
- Consider setting up a rotational grazing paddock system for livestock.

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

**Derek Hanton**, SAC Consulting, An Lochran, Inverness, IV2 5NA  
Tel: 01463 233 266 Email: derek.hanton@sac.co.uk

**Samantha Stewart**, SAC Consulting, 15 Hay Street, Elgin, IV30 1NQ  
Tel: 01343 548 787 Email: samantha.stewart@sac.co.uk

