

ABOUT NORTH AYRSHIRE MONITOR FARM

Farm name Girtridge Farm, Drybridge Road, Dundonald, Kilmarnock, KA2 9BX

Meeting Number 12- Livestock health and cattle nutrition (Megan Fergusson, Marion McMillan and Karen Stewart SAC)

Meeting Date Friday 16th November 2018

Next meeting TBC

Girtridge Farm is run by the business of Messrs John Howie, a partnership consisting of John Howie, his mother Margaret and his sister Mary. The business farms a total of 140 hectares of non-LFA land and 35 hectares of LFA grassland.

Livestock

Finished Cattle: Approximately 230 finishing cattle purchased through the local market and direct off farm all year round. The aim is to sell cattle at R4L deadweight through either Stoddarts or Highland Meats.

Sheep Flock: 250 cross ewes put to Suffolk, Texel and Abermax rams. All lambs are sold finished either through the live market or direct to slaughter through Farmstock. All replacement females are purchased privately or through the market.

Cropping

Spring Barley: 28 hectares of Spring and Winter Barley. All barley and straw produced is used on the farm.

Forage: 2 cuts of silage are taken with 7.13 hectares of hay also being produced.

The Management Group is chaired by Hazel Muir and includes John Howie, William MacTier, Andrew Welsh, Beth Errington, Gordon Walker, Louise Walker, Iain Reid, James Morrison, John Cowan, John Hunter, John Paterson, James Smith, Matt Mitchell, Philip Close, Robert Munro, Willie Campbell and David Young

KEY MESSAGES**Cattle Health**

- Be aware buying in new stock poses a risk of bringing in disease.
- Lungworm- First season grazers and late grazed cattle on ground previously grazed by youngstock are most at risk of Lungworm. Treat for lungworm post housing
- BVD is decreasing across Scotland but remains an issue where PIs are not culled- Phase 5 of Scotland's BVD scheme will be rolled out in June 2019

Sheep Health -Liver fluke

- Fluke risk should be assessed by use of forecasts and diagnostic fluke egg or coproantigen ELISA tests
- Achieve fluke control and prevent resistance by treating with the right product at the right time.

Beef Nutrition & Rationing

- Forage should be analysed to formulate a balanced ration to meet cattle needs.
- If cattle are not performing as expected, check other factors like housing, health and water supply
- 2018 silage 1st cuts shown to very dry followed by 2nd and 3rd cuts being considerably wetter.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- **Finishing Ration:** John's cattle seem to be underperforming in terms of DLWGs and so look at increasing grain in ration to reduce days cattle are on the farm.
- **Age of Stores Purchased:** John buys a range of ages of store cattle and buys primarily on price and weight – John may look to purchase younger cattle that have had better DLWGs pre-purchase.
- **Water Availability in Straw Shed:** Water bowls may not be sufficient for finishing cattle and may limit feed intake as 24-60 litres of water is required for a growing/finishing animal.

FARMERS UPDATE**Cattle**

- Cattle returned to Ashyards in mid -September.
- 52 bullocks & heifers rotationally grazing until the 12th of November.
- Dung samples from 2 bullocks were tested for lung worm and both results were positive.
- All cattle have been clipped, dosed for lungworm and tracherine intranasal for IBR.
- Currently 250 cattle on-farm including 1 cow and calf.

Barley

- 33 acres Winter Barley has been sown. However, the crop has suffered from damage by crows.

Silage

- Digestate has been spread on 42 acres at an application rate of 1700 gallon per acre, no fertiliser applied.

Sheep

- 344 ewes were put to 5 tups (including 2 Abermax tups (EBV Elite) purchased this year)
- 156 gimmers bought in including 100 Aberfields from Lothians Monitor Farm Saughland, with a few Lleyn X and mules purchased to make up the numbers.
- Ewes BCS 3. Gimmers are mostly BCS 4 and struggling to keep condition off them.
- Still 120 lambs on-farm, some of them are lame with CODD and/or footrot, causing reducing growth rates
- Nothing less than an R grade at the abattoir for the Abermax cross lambs so far this year.

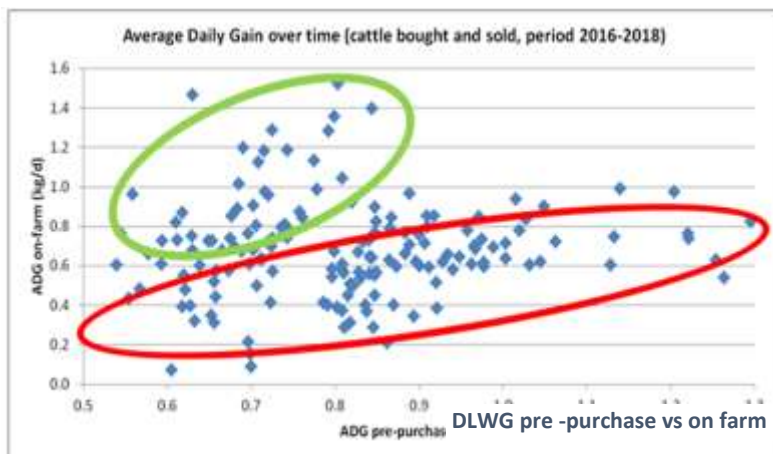
FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED**Beef nutrition and rationing**

John is keen to improve cattle performance and efficiency and effective rationing is key to this. Now able to weigh and record the cattle, he will be able to monitor performance against targets.

- Forage should be analysed to formulate a balanced ration to meet cattle needs.
- Do a feed budget as it is quick and enables planning ahead to meet any shortfall. Check the dry matter (DM%) as although the silage pit may look emptier or there are fewer bales than usual, there may still be the same amount of Dry Matter (DM) to feed the cattle.
- High quality silage is ideal for young and finishing stock but may result in suckler cows gaining condition if not rationed carefully. Target the best quality forage to the stock with the highest demands.
- In 2018 silage 1st cuts shown to very dry followed by 2nd and 3rd cuts being considerably wetter.

- It is important to set targets for growing and finishing cattle: “What Weight By What Date” – use their current weight and set a target weight by a certain date. A ration can then be formulated to meet the required DWLG.
- Suckler Cows: Must consider forage available, stage of pregnancy/lactation, and must ration to condition and age (e.g. 1st and 2nd calvers).
- It is important to monitor how cattle are growing on a ration - If cattle are not performing as well as expected check if cattle eating as expected (e.g. not clearing up too soon or feeding left untouched) or consider other factors i.e. health, environment, genetics and water.

- Know weights of cattle and know the weights of feed given.
- Ensure sufficient access to feed and water. Cattle require 5.4 litres of water per kilo of DM. Suggestions for improving water provision at Girtridge in the straw shed included more water bowls or bigger troughs in each pen.



- The Girtridge data analysis showed that overall the cattle had poor DLWGs and were on-farm longer than desired. The group circled in green had performed well at Girtridge. This highlighted the need to increase the proportion of cattle achieving optimum liveweight gain.

- Karen Stewart outlined the ration formulated for Johns cattle based on the silage analyses below.
1st cut: 44.7% DM, 10.9 ME, 11.9% CP; **2nd cut:** 32% DM, 9.6ME, 11.3% CP

Girtridge Ration (per head) based on finishing weight of 600kg and 1.3kg DLWG:

- 12kg silage (50% 1st cut: 50% 2nd cut)
- 8kg Barley
- 0.5kg Soya
- 70g Minerals
- To give an overall ration quality of 12.1 ME, 13.4 CP and 32% starch.



Karen Stewart outlines the principles of beef cattle rationing

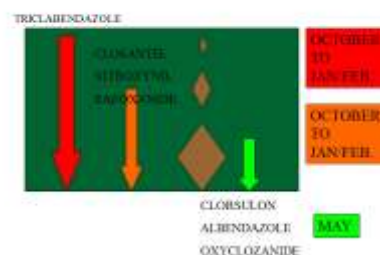
This may be revised as the group suggested getting the cattle finished quicker to reduce days on farm. The percentage of grain in the diet may increase to achieve a higher target liveweight gain.

Livestock health

Lungworm and BVD were highlighted– please see the appendix and presentations for more detail
 Liver fluke was discussed – please the appendix and presentations for more detail

- **When to Treat Sheep:** October, January and May should be the 3 main treatments. In high risk years treatment may need repeated 4-6 weeks after the October and January treatments.
- **When to Treat Beef Cattle:** Treat after housing. Treat outwintered cattle in winter and spring.
- **Quarantine Dosing:** Reduce risk of fluke by rotating treatments with different active ingredients and keep animals off wet ground for 4 weeks post-treatment.
- **Beware Toxicity:** Do not treat with products containing Closantel within 6 weeks of each other. Be cautious when using products containing Nitroxylnil that you don't overdose.
- The need to treat with the right product at the right time was emphasised.

Right Product Right Time



OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- John must manage his system well due to the biosecurity risks of purchasing stores all year-round.
- John could increase water provision for the cattle or even in alternate pens to access and monitor if water and feed intakes increase.
- Opportunity for John to increase DLWG and throughput of cattle by increasing grain in ration.
- Opportunity to look at finishing system and improve it –identify the type of cattle that perform well and consider buying younger cattle which have performed well pre-purchase.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- Grass growth was monitored showing increased growth from flat-lifter demo.
- Shed alteration to improve ventilation input, gates constructed in handling area.
- Ewes out with tups.
- Silage analysis taken, **1st cut:** 44.7% DM, 10.9 ME, 11.9% CP; **2nd cut:** 32% DM, 9.6ME, 11.3% CP and rations were formulated.

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