

ABOUT CORSKIE MONITOR FARM

Farm Name	Corskie Farm, Garmouth, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7NN
Meeting Number	11 -Cattle handling, Simon Turner SAC, EID -Hamish Stuart Sharon Flanigan JHI
Meeting Date	Tuesday 12 th February 2019
Next Meeting	Tuesday 7 th May 2019

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.

Cameron MacIver chaired this community group meeting.

KEY MESSAGES

Cattle Behaviour & Handling: Simon Turner discussed the effects of cattle temperament, especially cow behaviour effect on the unborn and new born calf. Cows with a poor temperament are more likely to be stressed, which affects the unborn calf which once born, is more likely to be smaller and grow slower. Research has shown that defensive mothers at birth, are not better mothers.

When handling livestock be aware of the golden rules:

- Avoid dead-ends;
- Give only one exit;
- Avoid distractions;
- Make use of tendency to circle handler;
- Return animals to point of origin;
- Calm, quiet with consistent lighting.

No contact with animals should be necessary.

Think about travelling through the handling system from the animal's point of view, looking at ways to meet the 'golden rules' above. This will improve cattle flow through the system.



Simon evaluated both the static and mobile cattle handling system at Corskie, suggesting ways in which it could be improved by making small tweaks.

He explained that making improvements to a cattle handling system does not have to be expensive, some suggestions to improve safety for the handler(s) and cattle, along with improving efficiency are as follows:

- Make exits from the pens and crush obvious.
- No obstruction should be placed within 6m in front of the crush, this allows animals to enter easier as they see it as an exit.
- Gates should open fully, to lie flat against a wall or fence, otherwise cattle are likely to accidentally catch it and close it.
- Boarding the sides of an open race, will improve movement of cattle forward as they cannot see other cattle or handlers for distraction.
- Cattle will be hesitant when walking on slippery surfaces. Worn out floors should be re-grooved for grip. Old wooden crush floors should be replaced to encourage livestock to stand still when restrained.
- Where possible, minimise shadows. This could be done by improving lighting in the handling area.
- Reduce sudden noises, cattle will hesitate if they hear metal crashing/people shouting. Look at using rubber strips to help soundproof cattle crush, also keep calm and quiet when handling livestock to help reduce spooking them.
- Square or rectangle pens can cause issues as cattle may try to push into a corner of the pen. This can be reduced by placing a board in the corner which will encourage cattle to turn their heads away from the corner.

Cattle EID:

- Hamish Stuart from ScotEID discussed the new cattle EID rules with the group, including how these are likely to be implemented and progress in cattle EID to date.
- New rules for compulsory cattle EID are imminent.
- At present the Scottish timescale for introduction is as follows (subject to change):
 - July 2019 – ability to voluntary EID tag new born calves
 - January 2020 – compulsory EID tagging for all new born calves
 - June 2020 – animals leaving the holding to be EID tagged
 - 2025 – All of the historic herd (all non-EID animals) to be EID tagged.
- At present it is very likely that cattle EID will take the form of high frequency (HF) tags. The current EID tags for cattle are similar to sheep tags, and are all low frequency (LF) tags.
- HF tags can be read from a further distance and a batch of animals can be read more efficiently, without having to run through a race individually.
- All Scottish marts (except Orkney) have recently installed HF readers, which on trial have been working well with very high read rates.
- Many of those at the meeting expressed concerns for equipment that they have already invested in, which may not be compatible with HF tags. It is hoped that the Scottish Government will allow a 'dual-frequency' tag which will contain a HF and LF signal. This would

allow batch recording with HF information, but also allow individual information (such as weights, breeding, treatments etc.) to be recorded on an individual basis accurately, using LF.



- New systems/technology generally come with additional cost, the discussion over how feasible this was for smaller herds was debated. Generally, the larger herds are more likely to invest in new technologies as they can spread the cost across have more animals and get more from the investment as it is used more often. However, when used correctly it can also be very beneficial for smaller herds, by boosting overall performance.
- The photograph shows some of the types of tags and readers which are in trial for HF tags.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Over 50 farmers attended the meeting discussing cattle handling and cattle EID systems.
- Everyone met in the grain shed at Corskie, where Cameron MacIver (management group) welcomed everyone to the meeting before handing over to Iain Green for the farm update – details below.
- Simon Turner discussed cattle behavior and safe handling techniques along with some essential elements for cattle handling system design.
- Attendees were split into three groups touring the following stations on-farm:
 - Simon Turner gave his appraisal of the current handling system at Corskie (including the mobile system); suggestions and discussion on ways in which slight tweaks could improve cattle flow and reduce resistance from cattle moving through the race.
 - Simon also reviewed the calving gate at Corskie and encouraged those who don't already have one to invest in one to improve health and safety on-farm for both farmer and livestock, along with any visitors on-farm, such as the vet.
 - The inbound cattle EID rules were discussed by Hamish Stuart from ScotEID; he highlighted the pros/cons of EID systems and updated the group on the rules and progress of the Scottish Government in initiating the rules. Iain Green showed the attendees the selection of bulls that are entered for the Stirling Bull Sales next week. EBVs and breeding details were visible on each pen and Iain talked through the positives of each.
- The attendees convened in the grain shed after the tour of the stations to hear the findings from work that The James Hutton Institute are completing (in which, some of the community, management and business groups have been involved). Sharon Flanigan updated the group on what the project is about and the findings to date.



FARMERS UPDATE

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

Arable

- Winter crops are looking well and quite advanced for this time of year.
- 10% of the 2019 harvest has been booked on contract £159/t + premium.
 - Looking at 2020 harvest also, currently able to book at £158/t + premium.
 - No further tonnage sold on contract since last meeting
- Spring cropping preparations are under way.
- 2019 spring barley varieties to be grown are Laureate, Fairing and Diablo, first year with no Concerto.

Cattle

- Jan/Feb calvers almost finished.
- Trialing the MooCall HEAT detector on a bull out with some heifers. The collar sends a text to Laura and record the dates on the App when the device detects a cow coming into heat.
- Winter forage supplies looking alright for now, still to be closely monitored.
- Autumn calvers looking fit, they were outwintered again after having calved due to mild weather.
- Beef Monitor Unit update: proving very useful. Next batch of cattle been on the system for 2 weeks
- Straw supplies are running low.

Sheep

- Pedigree Texel lambing due to start soon.
- Some of the 2018 lamb crop left to sell.
- Planning feed for the commercial ewes pre-lambing.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Consider options for weighing cattle; purchase of a new weigh system or additional Beef Monitor?
- Feed prices rising, possible challenge to weigh up options for feeding ewes pre-lambing.
- Challenge from lack of straw for bedding. Look at what is in stock on-farm now and plan for remainder of the winter months, consider alternatives.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- Monitor feed stocks and tweak cattle rations to balance forage for the remaining winter months.
- Evaluate the MooCall HEAT system, keep records and relate to calving dates later this year.

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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