

## ABOUT MORAYSHIRE MONITOR FARM

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

**Meeting Number** 05

**Meeting Date** Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017

**Next Meeting** Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018

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 AI is used to spread out calving across the year.

**Sheep:** There are 600 Mules and Mule cross Texel sheep which are lambled 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.

In addition, there is also three students from SRUC Craibstone campus, who have been selected to sit in on Management Group meetings and then to report back to their college class.

## KEY MESSAGES

- **Health & Safety On-farm:**
  - At the moment HSE are becoming more active in agriculture by carrying out pro-active inspections to help businesses ensure that they are compliant with the health and safety laws, as well as raising awareness of the dangers on-farm.
  - The top 3 areas involved in most on-farm accidents included working on roofs, moving machinery and working parts within machinery.
  - Other issues to consider involved minimising risks of hurting your back, especially when working with sheep and also avoiding/minimising dust, especially grain dust, as it is known to potentially cause lung problems.
- **Selling lambs by weight or condition:**
  - After some discussion it was felt that there was a market for the majority of lambs that are in finished condition, regardless of their weight. General consensus that lambs graded by weight only may be too lean for selling slaughter and that a decision would need to be made to keep them and feed them, sell them store or sell them as finished lambs. There were many factors to take into consideration from the breed of sheep to their diet etc.
- **The results from tests/trials throughout 2017 were discussed** including:
  - Soil compaction results from different tyres/tractors/trailers;
  - Soil My Undies experiment results;
  - Lime analysis results and information;
  - GPS soil analysis reports;
  - Yield map and quality results for bio-stimulant treated spring barley versus un-treated.
    - While we have one year of data for the bio-stimulants trials, the trial will be run again in 2018 to ensure the benefits seen were not a one-off.



Photo: Community group discussed the different sheep handling facilities and which one is most cost effective and would fit Iain's requirements the best.

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Over 60 farmers enjoyed an interactive day discussing a variety of topics, in particular sheep;
- Andrew Anderson, chair of the Management Group, welcomed everyone to Corskie and gave a run down of the plans for the day.
- Everyone met at Corskie, where several different sheep handling facilities were demonstrated.
  - Niall Bowser demonstrated the Rappa handling system, weigh crate and the DrenchMaster race.
  - Clive Houldey, ScotPen also demonstrated their handling system, which incorporated an auto sheep immobiliser and auto turn-over crate. Clive also demonstrated the Rancer manual sheep immobiliser/weigh platform which can slot into any existing sheep race.
  - Adam Leggat from ScotSqueeze demonstrated his automatic handling/weighing system to the attendees.
  - Jane Thomson from Shearwell demonstrated some of the electronic readers available to help manage sheep and recording.
- Iain was considering upgrading/adding to his current handling system to help reduce the number of people and time needed to work with the sheep on a regular basis. At the hall, in small groups each of the groups recommended a handling system for Iain with their reasons behind it. Nial Bowser's handling/weigh crate was the one most of the groups leaned towards, with the automatic systems also being well received but the higher price tags were hard to justify for most.
  - *Come along to the next meeting to find out if Iain bought any of the equipment....*
- Elaine McAllister, HSE spoke about health and safety on-farm and the importance of ensuring safety at all times within the business.

## FARMERS UPDATE

- The recent frosts have allowed all of the bales of straw to be gathered in from the fields.
- Iain has purchased feed barley for delivery June 2018 @ £129/t.
- Approximately 30% of Iain's predicted malting barley crop is secured on contract at £141/142/t + £20/t premium.
- The spring calves have been weaned and cows are now grazing on stubble turnips. Any cull cows have been sold.
- The commercial cows have been scanned, 17 were not in calf of which 12 would be second calvers. Iain is looking at what the reason for this might be and how he can manage his heifers with calves at foot differently.
- In 2017 Iain kept the commercial bull calves entire (Shorthorn x Simmental) which has seen him achieve on average a £0.30/kg premium.
- Corskie had two bulls forward for sale at the Christmas Classic at Thainstone, both went unsold.

- Iain has purchased 7 pedigree females (2 from England and 5 from Ireland); he stressed the importance of biosecurity and as such has moved the animals onto a holding of their own to keep them completely separate from his current herds until they have passed all of the tests etc.
- W J & J Green are also currently undergoing a full cross compliance inspection from SGRPID which includes the inspection of all fields, agri-environment scheme, farm records, NVZ plan (including measurements of slurry stores) and ensuring no cross-compliance rules have been breached.

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Number of second calvers struggling to get back into calf within the commercial herd.
- Opportunities out there to forward purchase/sell grain.
- Shortage of locally available straw could cause potential issues throughout winter.

## ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- Gather financial and performance data and feed into FarmBench.
- Carry out Machinery & Labour review.
- Scan ewes for 2018 lambing.
- Take advantage of opportunities to forward contract grain for 2018.

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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