

ABOUT MORAYSHIRE MONITOR FARM

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

Meeting Number 08

Meeting Date Tuesday 10th July 2018

Next Meeting Tuesday 16th October 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 are 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

- **Beef Monitor System:**

- Ross Robertson from Ritchie explained how the Beef Monitor system has been designed to take the stress out of weighing cattle;
 - Cattle take 7-10 days after being weighed through a crate to put on any weight due to the stress involved in going through a crate;
- Cattle automatically weigh themselves when taking a drink;
 - Each animal is identified through an EID tag with their weight being recorded whenever they come onto the monitor;
 - Cattle weigh themselves throughout the day, recording weights with full/empty stomachs and bladders, giving a more accurate weight.
- Helps save costs and can be used in a housed or grazed system
 - Accurate weights allow cattle to be slaughtered at target weight, saving on feed & time;
 - Illnesses can be picked up if an animal either loses weight or doesn't come to drink.

- **Spring Barley Varieties and Management:**

- Katie Murray from Syngenta talked through the farms spring barley trails;
 - Fertiliser was applied on the 8th April and 2nd May
 - Herbicide and manganese applied on 8th May
 - Herbicide and reduced rate fungicide applied 20th June
- Overall spring barley appears thinner than usual and struggling from lack of water;
 - All crops are generally looking very similar and ears are fully emerged;
 - Iain raised worries about pre-germ if rain is forecast due to the flag leaf not fully removing itself from the ear.
- Yields are expected to be lower than average;
 - Quality should hopefully be good, yield data to be observed after harvest.
- Katie is keen to see how SY Dolomite progresses as a new & upcoming SB variety;
 - High yielding;
 - Provisional approval for malting and distilling.

- **Winter Barley Varieties and Management:**

- Iain Lindsay from Syngenta focused on challenges that winter barley has faced this season;
 - Overall grain appears to be bold and filling nicely;
 - Reduced grain heads suggests possibility of a poorer yield;
 - Straw yield is also likely to be reduced;
 - Crops are overall clean of disease.
- How crops are looking seems to be dependant on fertiliser applications, early applications seem to be coping better;
 - Early application has helped maintain tillers and therefore yield;
 - Fertiliser is best being split 50:50 this year;
 - Organic matter in the soil from muck has helped retain moisture in soil.
- Overall all varieties are looking similar and should be harvested in the next month; any differences will be clearly seen then.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Over 40 farmers attended the meeting to see and discuss new beef technology, barley trials and the current weather situation;
- Martin Birse chaired the meeting before handing over to Sam Stewart later on in the meeting for a group breakout session on the current dry weather and contingency for the autumn/winter.
- Everyone met at Corskie, before being split into 3 groups touring the following on-farm stations:
 - Ross Robertson explained and demonstrated the Beef Monitor system
 - Katie Murray talked over the farms spring barley trials
 - Iain Lindsay spoke about the winter barley trials and how they are coping with the current dry period.
- After touring the on-farm stations the group split up to discuss what can be done to prepare for the autumn and winter, the group can up with the following suggestions;
 - Calculate what you need to feed/bed your livestock on-farm throughout the winter:
 - Prepare a winter feed budget (use what you have got, how much more do you need?);
 - Analyse forage to tailor rations to match livestock requirements.
 - Increase stocks of alternative forage feeds:
 - Consider cutting poorer cereals for whole crop (dryer feed = dryer dung = less bedding);
 - Stock up on draff, if available;
 - Contemplate ammonia treating straw.
 - Creep feed/wean young stock earlier to take pressure off the mothers and finish animals quicker.
 - Feed livestock at grass (concentrates/blocks) to ensure stock have sufficient energy/mineral supply.
 - Sell livestock to reduce pressure on the farm's feedstocks:
 - Sell calves/lambs earlier as store/forward store, rather than finishing. This allows feedstocks to be prioritised to the breeding herd/flock.
 - Scan cows/ewes early and sell any empty animals.
 - Increase numbers of cull animals sold. Determine any underperforming animals in the herd/flock and sell them, keep only the most productive cows/ewes on-farm.
 - Use a selection of forage crops to balance livestock winter rations. Potential to sow Italian ryegrass.
 - Potential to take a late cut of silage once grass begins to recover.
 - Use alternative bedding on-farm, such as sand, compost, sawdust, woodchip etc.
 - A layer of sand underneath straw will also aid drainage and help keep straw dryer.
 - Out-winter cattle, where possible. Reducing bedding requirement but stock will require more feed.
 - Export livestock to a location where forage is available (grass, forage crops or stubbles).
- Remember the 3Ps: Prepare, Plan and don't Panic!

FARMERS UPDATE

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

- The first of the early winter barley is expected to be cut this week.
- No further barley has been sold due to the ever-increasing future price, however 200t of 2019 harvest has been sold.
- All the sheep have now been sheared and a bolus has been given to all lambs.
- The first lambs of the year have been sold averaging £83/head.
- Some Suffolk x gimmers have been bought in for using as recipients for the pedigree Texel flock.
- Autumn calves have all been weaned with a group now on the Beef Monitor system.
- An average dead weight of 403kg was seen for the group of 16 bull beef animals sold.
- A homogenous polled bull calf has been bought from Denmark, due to the rise in demand for polled bulls.
- Iain is planning some more IVF flushing, currently using one Shorthorn and 4 Simmentals.
- First cut silage proved to be mixed; crop from heavy land was very good but lighter land was not the best crop.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Dry weather means that the majority of fields have been grazed with grass also being burnt in the heat.
- Hoping to get a late cut of silage, possibly September/October, to build up stocks for winter.
- Stubble neeps are going to be sown in available fields to ensure there is enough forage for the winter months.
- This lambing saw a large number of mastitis cases; fly strike has also been bad despite the warm weather.

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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