

ABOUT NORTH AYRSHIRE MONITOR FARM

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

Meeting Number **6 Cattle respiratory diseases, housing and rationing**

Meeting Date **01 December 2017 at Gowanbank Farm, Newmilns, KA16 9LB**

Next Meeting **Friday 26th January 2018**

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 all year round. The aim is to sell cattle at R4L deadweight through either Stoddarts or Highland Meats.

Sheep Flock: 140 cross ewes put to Suffolk, Texel and Beltex x tups. All lambs are sold finished through the live market. All replacement females are purchased through the market.

Breeding Cattle: 10 mixed breed spring-calving suckler cows running with a Limousin bull. Calves transition to the finishing cattle system.

Cropping

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

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

The Management Group is chaired by Craig Bryson and includes John Howie, Hazel Muir, 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

This December meeting was held at Gowanbank farm in Newmilns and was hosted by Craig Bryson

Host Farm Details

- Gowanbank and Townhead Farms, Newmilns are farmed by Craig Bryson and his family.
- Farm extends to 162 ha, of which 142 ha owned and 20 ha rented.
- 53 ha of wheat are grown for own use with the rest of the farm down to grass.
- 300 finished cattle per year (target 5-10 per week).
- 0.4 ha of tomatoes under glass.
- 75,000 pullets raised to point of lay.
- Continental cross stores purchased at 8-12 months.
- Cattle housed all year on slats with a rubber matted Orkney slope.
- Three cuts of quality silage are taken.
- Grazing sheep brought on to graze surplus grass.
- Target DLWG 1.45 kg/day for finishing cattle, 1.25 kg/day for growing cattle.
- Ration based on silage, home-grown crimped wheat, SBP, straw, hipro soya and minerals.
- Cattle sold deadweight to Stoddarts, Ayr targeting R4L at 350kg/DW.



Listening to Craig Bryson's introduction to the farm



Robert Gilchrist explaining the principles of rationing cattle

Meeting Topics

- Cattle rations – Robert Gilchrist
- Cattle respiratory Diseases – Helen Carty
- Housing and ventilation – c/o Jamie Robertson

KEY MESSAGES

Cattle Nutrition:

- Make the best forage you can to lower the p/MJ ME and reduce the need for purchased feeds.
- Make the best use of on-farm ingredients.
- Analyse your forages.
- Always work in Dry Matter. (DM)
- Rules of thumb for DM intake – 2% of liveweight for mature animals, 2% + 1 for immature animals.

Pneumonia:

Aim to minimise pneumonia risk, minimise pathogens and maximise immunity.

- Pathogens minimised by:
 - Shed ventilation and humidity
 - Stocking density of sheds
 - Avoid buying in where possible or purchase from reduced sources
 - Avoid mixing different groups
- Maximise immunity by:
 - Colostrum
 - Vaccination
 - Reducing inter current disease
 - Nutrition
 - Reducing stressors

Housing and Ventilation:

- For adult cattle, the ridge outlet should be 0.1 m²/hd.
- The combined inlet in each side wall should be twice the outlet. Double for high yielding cattle.
- Any gap wider than 25 mm does not control air speed, it increases it.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Robert Gilchrist:

What to do in a wet season with limited forage:

- Do a feed budget - How much silage is there on farm? (Pit – L x W x D /1.4 = Tonnes FW)
- What is the silage analysis, especially dry matter?
- How many animals are there on farm? How many can be sold?
- Budget the costs of feeding each batch vs. the sale price difference of selling now
- Check tax and cash flow implications of selling now
- Cull bottom 10% of cows and replace with heifers in the spring
- Save feed and improve herd performance
- Get finishing cattle on straw, barley & protein diet. Quicker turn around & cheaper than poor silage.
- Wean them..... NOW!

Helen Carty – Pneumonia:

Pneumonia is caused by several viruses (IBR, RSV, PI3, BVD), Bacteria (pasteurella, Mycoplasma bovis, Haemophilus and Salmonella) and by parasites (lungworm).

- Consult your vet at the earliest opportunity to determine the cause. Post mortems give a huge amount of information.

Jamie Robertson/Carol-Anne Warnock – Housing and Ventilation:

- Assess buildings for space, fresh air, air speed, moisture, temperature and hygiene of the shed.
- Water - The recommended water flow rates is 10 l/min the water depth should be a minimum of 80 mm to allow muzzle submerged 20-50 mm. Cattle drink up to 10% of bodyweight per day.
- Ventilation - The target windspeed within building is 0.5 m/s. The average wind speed in UK >4.5 m/s.
- Any gap wider than 25 mm does not control air speed, it increases it.
- When the wind speed drops, so does the ventilation rate.
- As a rule of thumb for ventilation:
 - For adult cattle - outlet in the ridge needs 0.1 m² per animal
 - Inlets in each sidewall need to be a minimum of the calculated outlet, twice for higher yielding cattle

Assessment of Girtridge's Buildings:

The Big Straw shed and the Cubicle shed were assessed for ventilation and budgeted solutions put forward with good paybacks achievable based on improved cattle performance.

FARMERS UPDATE

- 85 t of barley (not in the tower) has been bruised and 'propcorned'.
- All purchased gimmers (Mules, Tex X and Aberfirelds) have been vaccinated for Toxoplasmosis following the outbreak last year.
- We held the 1st benchmarking business group meeting on 26/9/17.
- More lambs have been sold deadweight to get a better understanding of the weights and grades.
- Only 8.09 ha of winter barley has been sown (had hoped for 20.23 ha). It has been fertilised with liquid fertiliser.

- 29 Shorthorn cross store cattle (bullocks and heifers) were purchased directly from the island of Inchmarnock near Bute. They have been vaccinated, dosed and clipped and are settling in well. They are good types and it will be interesting to see how they finish and the premium they attract. This is the first time the farm has purchased SH cattle.
- The tups are now running with the ewes (Texel, Suffolk and Abermax). We will compare performance between the Mule and Aberfield gimmers throughout the year.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Feeding different breeds and types (M/F, native/continental) of finishing cattle at Girtridge to advantage.
- Improving ventilation and shed climate to reduce the incidence of respiratory diseases and increase animal performance.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- A direct comparison of the Aberfield and Mule gimmers will be carried during tugging, through lambing and lamb sales. Both groups have been joined to Abermax rams.
- A cattle handling system has been purchased and is being installed in time for the next meeting.
- Jamie Robertson's suggestions on improving the ventilation of the cattle sheds have been taken on board and John is in the process of making alterations.

- Results of the Finished Cattle Assessment competition;

Grade

1st James Young, 2nd Willie Chalmers, 3rd Allan Reid

Live weight

1st Jim Smith (Killochhead), 2nd Allan Reid, 3rd John Campbell

Message – It is impossible to accurately guess the live weight of cattle. Invest in a weigh cell.

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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