

ABOUT NITHSDALE MONITOR FARM

Farm name Clonhie Farm, Penpont, Thornhill, DG3 4NB

Meeting Number **03 – Andrew Best and Rhidian Jones**

Meeting Date **Thursday 25th May 2017**

Next Meeting **Thursday 27th July 2017**

Clonhie is a tenanted farm on Buccleuch Estates run by Andrew and Aileen Marchant, new entrants to farming in 2012. Neighbouring Glengar was added to the farm business in 2016 taking the total farmed area to 303ha (750ac) running from 100m to 300m above sea level in the Marrburn valley, Penpont in Nithsdale.

Sheep - numbers are now up to 900 lambing ewes in 2017 with 240 ewe hogs, which are not in lamb. The main breeds are North Country Cheviots, Lley cross and Texel X Beltex. 130 Texel crosses lamb from early March inside, with the remaining 770 lambing outside in April.

Cattle – a small herd of 10 Luings is being established with the first calves being born this year. However, summer grazing cows and calves are taken in and store cattle are wintered in the sheds as well.

Management Group is chaired by local farmer Colin Forsyth, Bennan, and includes Nithsdale Vet Alistair Padkin, David Wilson, Marwhirn; Robert Osborne, Castlehill; John Wildman, Glenkiln; Alisdair Davidson, Poldean; Colin Cuthbertson, Thripland and Andrew Best of Watsons Seeds.



Colin Forsyth (Chair), Aileen, Andrew & William Marchant welcome everyone



The community group hear how the 2017 lambing went

KEY MESSAGES

Good lambing season at Clonhie

- Te-Pari Racewell sheep handling system proving to be useful in its first weeks at Clonhie
- Read the labels for information on residual activity of sprays used for weed control
- Comparison trials have been set up for groups of this season's lambs
- Discussions on choice, establishment and use of forage crop for next winter

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Chairman, Colin Forsyth welcomed about 56 attendees. Clonhie's new Te-pari Racewell sheep handler and auto drafter was demonstrated, weighing and drafting ewe hogs by liveweight. This equipment is essential for the monitoring and recording of the Clonhie flock for both the Monitor Farm Project over the next 3 years



- Andrew showed the group his 2016 reseed, which has a thistle problem. The field has been sprayed with a mixture of Lupo (2.5 ltr/ha) and Galgone (1 ltr/ha), which has killed the thistles but also the young clover. Andrew Best discussed options for re-establishing the clover after the 1st cut silage using either a 'einbock' grassland manager drill or an erth agriseeder drill.
- Two types of white clover seed were proposed for re-instating clover in the sward: -
A straight (untreated clover seed) sown at 2.47kg/ha or 'CAST' clover seed sown at 3.7kg/ha, (a coated seed containing humic acids, and rhizobia bacteria). The pros and cons of re -establishing clover were discussed



Andrew Best, Andrew Marchant & Rhidian Jones considering the thistles in the 2016 reseed – should we re-establish the clover in this field?

- Lamb comparison trials have been setup:
 - Castrated/entire single lambs from the early lambing group
 - Groups of lambs fed 14% creep feed / 18% creep feed / no creep feed

- About half the lambs with Lleyl batch of ewes were given a 1.0ml 'SMARTShot' B₁ injection (Vitamin B₁₂) - in place of cobalt drench or bolus / the other half got no injection

All the Clonhie lambs have been electronically tagged, and treatments and liveweights recorded individually. At this stage there were no differences between the treatment groups, but Andrew is looking forward to seeing if there are differences as the season progresses.

Grassland and grazing management

Rhidian discussed the grass measurements he has taken at 3 weekly intervals since March (figures below). The cold dry spell combined with the increasing demand from newly lambed and milking ewes mean grass covers fell in late April/early May. However, the rain and better temperatures over the last fortnight have improved things with recent growth rates greatly increased. Moving the NCC ewes over to Glengar reduced demand on Clonhie and the better growth recently has allowed silage fields to be shut off.

Although Andrew has bunched the sheep into larger than usual lots and has started to move them around a field at a time, the main grassland management plan is to introduce a grazing rotation for ewes over next winter: -

- Controlling what the sheep eat and when they eat it – matching their nutritional needs
- Planning to have a good amount of grass available in the spring when ewes have higher requirements in late pregnancy and early lactation – reducing the need for purchased feed.
- To do this, some fields will need to be shut off in late summer to let grass grow for winter feed

Forage crop options

Andrew Best discussed plans for a winter forage crop, for use in January/February/March, to take pressure off the grazed fields at this time of year. A frost hardy crop is needed for Jan- march grazing so Maris Kestrel Kale mixed with Gowrie Swedes were chosen. Andrew proposes to:

- Plough the field to establish the crop the mixed crop in the next 10 days or so
- Lime the field applying the Calcium lime to raise the pH up to 6.5 optimum for kale/swedes
- Seed rates of 2.2kg/ha Maris Kestrel & 0.2kg/ha of Gowrie seed mixed total 2.4kg/ha



FARMERS UPDATE

- Had a good lambing in great conditions – the lamb marking results are given below
 - The NCC X Lleyn ewes were a joy to lamb – it was a field Andrew looked forward to going into
 - Great to see the NCC ewes and their Aberfield X lambs off to Glengar hill after marking – these lambs were given 0.5ml SMARTShot B₁₂ injection before they went off to the hill
- Andrew's first use of Footvax on the ewe hogs has worked wonders, the difference this year is remarkable. Wonder whether it might be worth considering doing more of the flock.
- Draining repairs in a few fields have been completed and the fencers are here now fixing an upgrading fences needing attention
- 115t of calcium lime have been spread at 5t/ha (2t/ac), on 20ha (50ac) silage fields and the kale field to bring the soil pH up to 6.2 to 6.4 – aiming to improve nutrient availability for grass growth
- There is a thistle problem in the 2016 reseed – what to do next?
- Andrew is delighted with the 6-year-old 'Craigdarroch' Luing bull he purchased recently, which should breed some good heifers to increase herd numbers over the next few years – unfortunately he was in the wrong corner and out of sight during the farm tour!

FACTS AND FIGURES DISCUSSED

Sheep Topic - Clonhie 2017 Scanning and Lambing results:

	No scanned	Scan %	Marking %	Mark% / Scan%
* Early Texels	130	176% /		
* Lleyn X ewes	307	184% / 175%	141%	81%
* Gimmers	192	161% /		
NCC gmrs & ewes	269	132%	102%	77%

* - these groups of ewes have been mixed up during and after lambing so separate marking results are not available for them.

Grass Measurements – for fields on Clonhie in Spring

	22 nd March	10 th April	2 nd May	23 rd May
Av Farm cover (kgDM/ha)	1198	1283	1206	1416
Livestock Demand (kg/ha/day)	14	15	22	25
Av Pasture Growth Rate (PGR) (kgDM/ha/day)	-	19	15	34
Comments	- early lambers housed - 320kg/conc fed/day	- early lambers at grass - 375kg conc fed/day	- most ewes lambed - no conc being fed - increasing demand &	- PGR increasing -190 NCC ewes at Glengar - 22ha shut up for silage - no conc fed to ewes - lamb creep introduced

Lamb Creep Trial – spring 2017

Group	18% creep feed	14% creep feed	No creep feed	Ram Lambs
Av Liveweight (kg)	22.7	24.6	24.4	22.75
Av Daily Liveweight Gain (DLG) (kg/day)	0.28	0.30	0.30	0.29
Av age (days)	66	68	66	
Heaviest LWt (kg)	38.5	37	32.5	
No ewes (& lambs)	49 (+71)	46 (+66)	15 (+22)	
Field size (ha)	6.16	5.99	2.52	
Ewes/ha	7.95	7.7	5.95	
PASTURE COVERS				
10/04/17	1284	1515	1200	
02/05/17	1298	1375	1186	
23/05/17	1480	1424	1452	

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

Judith went over the Business Group opportunity as part of the Monitor Farm Program: -

- FarmBench and its benchmarking / farm budgeting capabilities.
- The opportunity for this group to discuss the various economic (input and output costs/fluctuations), climate change, BREXIT and international trading challenges that our industry is likely to face in the next few years.
- The aim to develop business and personal skills e.g. an understanding of communication styles team leadership, business planning, diversification possibilities.

- The group will have some input as to the topics covered as time goes.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- The management group will discuss the clover establishment at next week's meeting and suggest to Andrew what might be done in the silage field and consider a trial comparing two different drills to establish clover in a grazed field.
- The liveweight grains of the lambs will be monitored and recorded at handlings during the summer. Results and reports of any prime lamb sales will be given at the July meeting.
- Forage crop will be established in the next week or so.

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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