

ABOUT NITHSDALE MONITOR FARM

Farm name Clonhie, Penpont Thornhill DG3 4NE

Meeting Number **05**

Meeting Date Thursday 5th October 2017

Next Meeting Thursday 7th December 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 farmed area to 303ha (750ac), from 100m to 300m above sea level near Penpont in Nithsdale.

Sheep: 900 lambing ewes with 240 ewe hogs, not in lamb. Ewe breeds include North Country Cheviots, Lleyn cross and Texel X Beltex. 130 Texel crosses lamb from early March inside, with the remaining 770 lambing outside in April.

Cattle: A herd of 10 Luings with the first calves being born this year. However, summer grazing cows & calves are taken on and store cattle are wintered in the sheds as well.

Management Group: Colin Forsyth (Chair), Alistair Padkin (vet), David Wilson, Robert Osborne, John Wildman, Alisdair Davidson, Colin Cuthbertson and Andrew Best of Watsons Seeds

KEY MESSAGES

The Clonhie lamb trials gave good results – details available in meeting presentation.

- Partial Budget comparison for 'Early' and April Lambing groups made decision straight forward
- Tup MOTs are essential to flock performance and prevent disaster
- Ewe Body Condition Scoring is essential for planning grazing allocation and managing overall flock performance
- Marketing starts with production decisions on farm – not at the farm gate

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Attendees split into 3 groups to rotate round 3 stations: (details in 5thMTGhandout)-

1. Tup MOTs with Alistair Padkin of Nithsdale Vets
2. Ewe Body Condition Scoring with Rhidian Jones
3. Lamb Marketing with Judith Hutchison

FARMERS UPDATE

- Andrew Marchant reported that lamb sales had gone fairly well to date. Summer prices for the early lambs were good. He has now sold 212 prime lambs at an average of 38.8kgLwt for £86.32/hd and 18.55kgDwt for £78.18/hd and 198 stores at an average of £56.67/hd.
- At weaning, the lambs were split into top, middle and bottom liveweight groups so they could be managed easily. The stores were sold from the bottom group and the rest of this group have now gone to grazing at Tibbers a few miles away, they probably won't be handled again until after New Year. Most of the top group are away or nearly ready, but the demand for good cover is slowing sales, so he thought he'd bring them in out of the rain and feed them for a couple of weeks to get them away as best he could. Then he would draw in the best of the next group and repeat the exercise to finish them all by December.
- The mob grazing of large batches of ewes and lambs over the summer worked well with everything doing well, despite the weather, and Andrew has got to September with some good covers of much better grass than ever before.
- He weaned at about 110 days, which worked fine, but it has given him the confidence to wean even earlier in future. It makes a tremendous difference to have the lambs on the best of grass and get the ewes out of the way.
- He was really pleased with the ewe lambs he had from the Aberfield.
- Andrew has bought 3 more Aberfield tups to continue his replacement policy and a Highlander tup to put to some ewe lambs to as he doesn't want to go any more than 50% Aberfield – he is keen to maintain the benefits of hybrid vigour
- He has plenty of silage in the pit and made some bales off the Thistle field from a 2nd cut last month. He plans to get this analysed shortly
- The cattle have done well and the true potential of the Luining has shown through in the growth of the stores; the top DLWG is 1.23kg/hd/day over the summer.



FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

Grassland Update

- Grass covers were measured again last week with average cover now at 2204kgDM/ha, the highest since May, with demand from the stock reduced through sales. This augers well for having ideal grazing supplies for the flock over the winter period. Covers will be measured again before calculating how many ewes the 26ha of deferred grazing will feed and for how long
- The kale & swede crop has thrived this year as shown by the photos. Before the ewes are put onto the crop we will measure the yield and calculate how many ewes it will feed and for how long.
- Rhidian also showed slides from a couple of spread sheets which can be used to calculate and allocate grazing.



Partial Budget and on Farm Lamb Trial Reports

A partial budget was used to compare the gross margin figures for the early & April lambing groups at Clonhie. The income per head was £27.49 more for the early lambers and the variable costs were £12.46 per head more for the early lambers, however the £15.03 /head difference in gross margin over 125 ewes was not enough to cover the extra labour costs. The group discussed options available to Andrew.

- Increasing early lambing numbers to 250 or 300 would make it more worthwhile
- Using the shed for wintering B&B cattle would make at least as much if not more
- No matter what you think you are not performing in weeks 8 and 9 of a long lambing
- Factors such as Aileen's job, family commitments, rugby coaching are also important
- Andrew has decided to lamb the whole flock in April and use the shed for cattle
- A £2.68/head benefit was gained up to weaning from the 94p 'SmartShot' injection given at marking. Andrew will report on further benefits beyond weaning as Alistair Padkin agreed that the benefit could continue for longer, depending on the demand for the cobalt from the lamb.
- Little or no difference was found between the DLWG of entire and castrated tup lambs
- The creep feed comparison trial showed 14% CP creep feed increased DLWG from 230g/hd/day (for the control group) to 280g/hd/day while 18% CP feed increased DLWG to 300g/hd/day. In this exercise this was valued at £2.00/kg increased returns of 2.25p/hd/day and 4.04p/hd/day for the 14% and 18% feeds respectively (after feed costs).
- This year's sale price was higher for these lambs so the benefit was actually higher
- NB the benefit depends entirely on the sale price which, as discussed in the lamb marketing session, is both volatile and unpredictable

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- The Clonhie Business Group had a short catch up meeting at the end of the day to discuss progress with FarmBench so far and will have an interim meeting at the end of October before the next group meeting with Gavin Dick and Doreen Anderson in mid- November

ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING

- All tups will go out in early November for the April lambing
- Topping will take place on the lambing fields and ewes will be moved to winter grazing in mid-December once they are settled in lamb – Rhidian will go through the final grass covers, kale crop yield kgDM/ha and allocation for grazing over the winter period at the next meeting.
- Silage analysis to be done and rations worked out for the ' B&B' cattle coming in to the sheds

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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