

## ABOUT NITHSDALE MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Clonhie Farm, Penpont, Thornhill, DG3 4NB
Meeting Number	07- Alex Brewster on grassland management and Aileen Marchant on social media
Meeting Date	Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2018
Next Meeting	Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2018

**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 (800ac) running from 100m to 300m above sea level in the Marrburn valley, Penpont in Nithsdale.

**Sheep** - numbers were up to 900 lambing ewes in 2017 with 240 ewe hogs (not in lamb). The main breeds are North Country Cheviots, Lleyn cross and Texel X Beltex. 130 Texel crosses lambed from early March inside, with the remaining 770 lambing outside in April. Tups used included Texel, Beltex & Aberfield.

**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



Andrew & Rhidian discussing the kale crop



Alex Brewster on electric fencing



The ewes into this morning's ration

# FARM REPORT



Last month's deferred grazing recovering well.



Today's ration 11.3ME; 20% protein; content ewes



Plenty of grass for 2 days

## KEY MESSAGES

- The sheep are doing well on the kale & swedes crop, they are eating it down well & are content
- The deferred grazing is also working well with content ewes and paddocks recovering very well
- This week's grass analysis = 11.2ME and 20.8% crude protein – as good as any bought in feed!
- Short of ~ 10 days kale and ~ 30 days grazing to get the flock to 1<sup>st</sup> April lambing date
- Electric fencing key to grazing control and utilisation for vastly improved LWt kg/ha produced

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- The meeting began with a walking tour to the kale and deferred grazing fields to see how Andrew's ewes were fairing on the new wintering systems. The flock is doing well on both systems "they are in much better condition for less cost than in the past" reported Andrew "The forage budget does show that there will not be enough to see them all the way through to lambing though, so we need to work out how best to fill the gaps." Suggestions from the group included: -
  - Feed ewes a little concentrate to eke the kale and grass out – this means spending money.
  - Feed some silage, of which Andrew has enough but that means taking tractor into wet fields, risking damage to sward and may not be easy when sheep are moving on in the paddock system.
  - Lightly graze the lambing fields now, to stimulate grass growth in preparation for lambing time
  - The deferred grazing fields have/are recovering well, so could go back round re-grazing the paddocks for a shorter time in each one. This should just about give enough to fill the gap. It will also stimulate good early growth in April giving extra grass for lambed ewes – sounds ideal.
- With such good forage analyses for the kale and grass hopefully don't need to feed the ewes much at all. Discussion on whether and how much to feed multiples rolls or DUP soya, (as suggested by John Vipond at the first meeting). A little DUP soya should help with colostrum quality & quantity

# FARM REPORT

- Opportunity to see some electric fencing equipment and discussion giving tips and ideas on how different people erect and use e-fencing to manage their grazing between community group members and Alex Brewster.

## FARMER'S UPDATE

- Andrew gave a farm update covering the
  - Topping – tups out for 34 days and an average of 65 ewes to a tup
  - scanning – average scan = 169% (5% up on last year) – ewes batched by scan results and body condition scores (BCS)
  - all ewes given their regular fluke dose
  - the dairy calf rearing enterprise being tried out and which the Marchant's are considering as a possible diversification.
  - Deer also being considered as a diversification – Andrew enjoyed working with deer at Barony. Clonhie is suitable for deer, GM of £700/ha is possible against £234/ha (in 2016/17 year from FarmBench exercise) for sheep currently at Clonhie; strong growth market are all positives. Capital investment required, being an estate tenant and finding suitable breeding hinds from a TB4 area are the main challenges
- Rhidian went back through the details of the calculations etc for both the kale and deferred grazing allocations – see the meeting handout and 7<sup>th</sup> meeting farm update ppt for all the calculations etc.

## FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

Alex Brewster did a talk on changes implemented at his farm, Rotmell near Dunkeld, outlined his plans for the future and gave his thoughts on the future carrying capacity of the farm.

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES



Aileen Marchant's presentation on social media for farmers

# FARM REPORT

Aileen Marchant gave a presentation on the potential of social media and how we as farmers can help to support our livestock industry by putting out positive messages. This includes photographs, captions and good information out into the public domain to help inform the general public and be positive about all the different things that we do in our daily lives. Aileen suggested that we should not get drawn into arguments over negative posts but focus on portraying the many positives our industry has to offer to the environment, animal health & welfare, economic activity in rural areas. Getting our many and varied messages out to those, who possibly don't understand and/or appreciate all that the farming industry does for our country's economy, environment and society is really important to farming and we should all get better at it.

## ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Keep flock going forward to lambing time [and pray for no more snow or hard frosts] by increasing grazing allocated to give increased nutrition as nutrition requirements increase during pregnancy.
- Possibly add in a little soya or 18% cake in last 2 or 3 weeks as needed – help colostrum quantity/quality
- Soil sample Glengar, plan lime applications to raise pH to target (pH 6+) on next best fields
- Monitor calf rearing enterprise and report back on figures and performance
- Report lambing and marking data to next meeting

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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