

ABOUT SHETLAND MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Bigton Farm, Shetland Monitor Farm with meeting held at Ness Boating Club and Scholland Farm courtesy of the Leslie family
Meeting Number	14 Fodder beet and barley trials, Jim Logan-embracing business change and Alan Clarke and Kate Rowell QMS
Meeting Date	Saturday 1 st June 2019
Next Meeting	Saturday 17 th August 2019

Kirsty and Aimee Budge are our Shetland Monitor Farmers, at Bigton farm on the south west of the Shetland mainland.

Land: Two units are run together, covering 305 ha of in by and rough grazing.

Crops: Around 25 ha of spring barley is grown, 4ha of forage rape and about 40ha of silage cut.

Cattle: 82 Shorthorn x Saler cows producing Saler or Charolais x calves which are sold store or finished.

Sheep: 350 Shetland x Cheviot breeding ewes which are put to a Suffolk tup. Replacements are bought in.

Scholland cows on rotational grazing



Management group members are: Jamie Leslie (Chairman): Scholland Farm, Graham Fraser: SAC Consulting, Kirsty Budge: Bigton Farm, Aimee Budge: Bigton Farm, Lauraine Manson: Hestigarth, Walls and Shetland Livestock Marketing Group, Hilary Burgess: Quendale Farm and Shetland Animal Health Scheme, Eric Graham: Gremista Farm, Jim Tait: Shetland Vets, John Abernethy: Verdahill, Twatt, Johnina Henderson: Breckon, Yell, John Sandison: Parkview, Bigton, Aaron Sinclair: Sandlodge Farm, Jacob Eunson: Uradale, Matthew Westmoreland: Hoversta, Bressay

Ideas for trialling at the Monitor Farm are welcome and should be directed to one of the management group.

- 40 farmers and crofters came along to hear Jamie Leslie of Scholland Farm, Jim Logan of Pirntaton and Kate Rowell and Alan Clarke of QMS give presentations.

KEY MESSAGES

- Effectively managing change
- Benefits of rotational grazing
- Increasing output from Spring Barley
- Fodder Beet and other forage crops as economic source of feed

FARMERS UPDATE

Bigton Farm Update:

Due to a family bereavement Kirsty and Aimee were excused from giving an update to this meeting and will bring everyone up to speed in August.

Jamie Leslie, Scholland Farm



With the weather due to deteriorate during the day it was decided to start the day with a tour around Scholland Farm. First stop was to see the Salome barley trial that Jamie is participating in. This is part of a collaborative innovation project with two other farms; Bigton on Shetland and the Angus Monitor Farm and will include virtual agronomy sessions to share the experiences. We went to see the sheep and cattle on the rotational grazing at Hestingott. After the farm visit we returned to the Ness Boating Club for tea and coffee and Jamie gave us a presentation outlining the farming operations at Scholland

- Mixed Family farm, Dad, wife, brother, kids cousins all with roles
- 350ha owned/rented/contract farmed
- 80 suckler cows, progeny store/fattened
- 1000 ewes and hoggs tuppied, lambs sold store
- 20ha Spring cereals
- Various fodder crops

Old system was to get ewes through until scanning on available grass + barley and then feed with a snacker and deferred rough grass. Last year concentrate spend was under £10 per ewe tuppied, Still room for improvement. Deferred grazing area was at capacity so expansion was limited.

Fodder Beet

- Limiting factor - Winter fodder
- Why? Reduce costs, carry more ewes, free up grass for cattle.
- Expensive ££££££
- Likes salt, dislikes frost, ideal for Scholland?
- Steep learning curve
- Fun!

Is fodder beet the answer? Massive DM/ha potential. Suits limited arable area. Bulb less at risk than a leafy crop like kale in our winter climate. This fodder beet crop is now part of a Monitor Farm collaborative project with seven other farms in Scotland involved in the Monitor Farm project.

Why bother, ultimately profit and we have a few ways to achieve that.

It cost £900 per ha to grow, £150 above had been hoped due to low Potash and IRG/Laser.

Mediterranean plant originally and only one way to find out....

It was sown early in 2018 direct drilled (suited Scholland's sandy soils) in late April into a field and followed a crop of swedes.

Seedlings were established by 9th May. Gales in mid-June destroyed the flag leaf on much of the spring barley and burnt the perennial ryegrass but the fodder beet romped on appearing unaffected by the salt spray. The beet has a very deep tap root and despite the very dry spell in 2018 it seemed to find all the moisture it needed and soon established a huge solar capturing area of foliage that made the most of Shetland's daylight hours.

Fodder Beet Yield 2018

- So we can grow it at 60°N
- 18t DM/ha bulb + 4.5t DM Leaf (measured 05/10/2018)
- Utilisation of 80% +
- 5p/kg DM eaten
- Grazed Grass cost <5p
- Silage 10-18p
- Concentrate feed in Shetland 26-32p

This resulted in feeding costs that were roughly 50% of the previous grass plus snacker costs

Ewe winter costs

- Scanned at 170%
- Beet and concentrate + barley costs averaged at £8.20 per ewe
- Ewes on pre lambing rotation only had beet and grass - £5.40

330 ewes on beet, 3 under body condition score 3, none under 2.5, 15 were 4 or over



Scholland's new Cattle Accommodation

Because the ewes are on beet, this area is free for cattle allowing all mature cows to be kept out until 1st Feb. normally they would have been housed in November. Reduced silage uses of 1.5t/cow plus saved housing and labour costs. High value in cows being fit and healthy before calving. Actual saving of £90 per cow.

Electric fencing was used to split the links into several paddocks:

- Allocated grass = better utilisation and low input requirement animals are rationed
- Back fence = grass has a chance to come again....
- Even in winter...
- Even in Shetland...
- Quality not quantity

Barley Yield Enhancement Network (YEN) - National competition and knowledge sharing

- Entered in 2019 again
- Lot more Spring Barley entries this year throughout the UK
- Swedish variety 'Salome' chosen for early maturity
- Monitor Farm Innovation funded the seed across the farms involved in the project
- Early signs are that the crops look to have a huge potential this year

Foliar K

- Hopefully a solution for us.
- Sandy soils at Scholland can't hold onto K
- Feed through the leaves

Grass YEN – similar approach to cereal YEN

2ha plots judged on ME and DM yield

- 3 trial plots
- 1. Standard fertiliser
- 2. Standard + 10kg Foliar urea
- 3. Standard + 10kg foliar urea and 2.5L foliar K

Growing Yield

- All plots 2315kg DM/HA on 27/4/19
- **5/5/19:**
 - Plot 1 (Foliar K) 3215kg
 - Plot 2 (standard) 3315kg
 - Plot 3 (standard + Urea + K) 3615kg
 - Urea = 11% more growth

Harvest

- Plot 1-115kg (9m x 3m weighed from each plot) (still awaiting quality analysis)
- Plot 2- 103kg
- Plot 3-135kg

- Foliar K has given us 11.6% more grass
- Foliar Urea has given us 17% more grass

Jamie's final comment was that he turned cattle out early this year having only housed all his cattle for a total of 60 days. His 'Farmax' programme told him to turn out even earlier but he was wary however with hindsight he should have believed in the programme and thinks he should have had his young light cattle out 10 days earlier than he did.

"Push the boundaries and seize an opportunity when it presents itself"

Kate Rowell, Chair of QMS Board and Alan Clarke, QMS Chief Executive

Kate Rowell kicked off the presentation giving a bit of background of her experience as a farmer and vet that led to her being appointed Chair of the QMS Board. She is a fifth- generation farmer running both beef and sheep on the 750 hectare Hundleshope farm on the Haystoun Estate, where the family have been tenants for 150 years. She runs the hill unit near Peebles with her husband Ed and their four children.

Kate outlined her role within QMS and highlighted how far and wide she had travelled with QMS helping to promote Scotch beef, lamb and specially selected pork. How she had been thrust in at the deep end with regards to representing Scottish farming interests in the media and gave examples of promotions, awards and worldwide events she had taken part in such as food events in Paris and Tokyo.

Kate then handed over to Alan Clarke who explained the QMS strategy which is:

"To support the development of a sustainable, professional, resilient and profitable Scottish red meat industry which makes an important contribution to Scotland Food and Drink target of £30bn by 2030"

He also outlined their vision:

"Our vision is to be valued by our farmer and processor levy payers and key stakeholders as a business support organisation which delivers strongly for the Scottish meat industry as it continues to build a global reputation for animal welfare, quality assurance and integrity"

Alan outlined the various bodies that QMS work with to achieve the organisation's strategy and vision to support our industry, develop our industry and to promote our industry. A copy of Kate and Alan's presentation can be found on the QMS Monitor Farm Hub.

Jim Logan, Pirntaton Farm

Jim's opening slide said:

A New Dawn – “Embracing Change and Experimentation in Business”

He ran through a potted history of his family's farming business and how it has changed from an emphasis on pedigree cattle and sheep breeding to follow the following objective:

“To develop a business model and farming system which is profitable and sustainable without reliance on subsidies”

He went through the process of change and the Strategy statement they came up with

“Commit to a pastoral system and focus on reducing cost of production whilst increasing output per hectare by making best use of resources available on farm”

A major part of the change has been the introduction of a rotational grazing system which has increased grass production by up to 30% and increased utilisation from 50% to 80%.

Jim stressed the significant benefits of rotational grazing and that any subdivision is better than none. Jim covered a lot of the changes made at Pirntaton to the system and to the infrastructure in terms of fencing, water supplies, roads and handling facilities.

There is a lot of information in his presentation which can be found on the QMS Monitor Farm hub. He finished his excellent presentation with the statement:

“I've learned so much from my mistakes, I'm thinking of making a few more.”

ACTIONS FROM MEETING

- Don't be afraid to make changes and mistakes
- Consider growing fodder beet and/or other forage crops
- Push for higher spring barley yields
- Any subdivision is better than none

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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