

## ABOUT SHETLAND MONITOR FARM

Farm name **Bigton Farm, Bigton, Shetland, ZE2 9JA**

Meeting Number **02 – Pre-Lambing**

Meeting Date **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017**

Next Meeting **Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

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 inbye and rough grazing.

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

**Cattle:** 72 Shorthorn x Saler cows producing Saler or Charolais x calves which are sold store.

**Sheep:** 240 Shetland x Cheviot breeding ewes which are put to a Suffolk tup. Replacements are bought in.



As this second meeting was held just before lambing starts for most Shetland farms and crofts, the nutrition of ewes was the main topic. The importance of protein, and especially undegradable protein or DUP was discussed, with several farmers using soya with silage or DUP blocks. Condition scoring of sheep was tried out, using condition scoring pads to get a measure and then real sheep to practice on. Jim Tait from the local vet practice went through a list of diseases of ewe and lamb that are common on Shetland at lambing time, followed by a practical session on stomach tubing the use of intra-peritoneal injections and the Bigton lamb (and calf) warming box.

As before, the local hall put on an excellent lunch and after being out on farm, there was tea and home baking.

### **A management group has been formed, and the members are:**

Jamie Leslie (chairman), Scholland Farm; Graham Fraser, SAC Consulting; Kirsty Budge, Bigton Farm; Aimee Budge, Bigton Farm; Lauraine Manson, Hestigarth Farm; Hilary Burgess, Quendale Farm; Eric Graham, Gremista Farm; Jim Tait, Shetland Vets; John Abernethy, Verdahill Farm; Johnina Henderson, Breckon Farm; John Sandison, Parkview Farm; Aaron Sinclair, Sandlodge Farm; Ronnie Eunson, Uradale Farm; Matthew Westmorland, Hoversta Farm.

Anyone with suggestions regarding issues the Monitor Farm should be looking at, should contact one of the management group to feed in their ideas.

## KEY MESSAGES

- Using dehorning paste is an alternative to dehorning older calves with a burner. Bigton's preference for paste in a syringe like tube as opposed to tubs was of interest to many.
- A camera system saves time and allows checking of the cows (or sheep) without disturbance.
- Hypothermic lambs – don't give colostrum to a lamb that cannot lift its head or its temperature is less than 37°C – instead, give it an injection of glucose.
- Hypothermic lambs – if the lamb is over 5 hours and can hold its head up, it is safe to stomach tube with colostrum.
- Condition scoring of ewes at key times is vital for good sheep management. Several farmers commented that condition scoring pre tupping gave the best opportunity to sort any in poor condition. It was felt that trying to rectify poor condition just before lambing was much trickier because of the risk of excessively large lambs. Thin ewes/gimmers should be put on a pre lambing diet early.
- The fertility of a ewe is affected by her nutrition in early life, therefore take care to feed ewe lambs or hogs adequately.
- Feeding the ewe pre lambing helps lambs form brown fat, which lambs can burn to avoid hypothermia.
- Adding DUP to the pre lambing diet helps give the ewes enough protein as normal dietary protein not enough at this time.
- Keep calciject 20 solution in store for ewes with suspected staggers or milk fever.



## AREAS OF DISCUSSION Expand on two of the key messages discussed and what were the key concerns or innovations

- After Kirsty described the Bigton sheep feed costs, each table worked out their own winter feed costs. There were a variety of systems in the room which partly reflected the wide range in costs, but there were differences even in prices paid for feeds as well as quantities and types fed. Costs per ewe varied from zero to £27 per ewe.
- Bigton feed costs are reasonable, helped by having high quality home grown silage, and being able to use home grown barley. Concentrate nuts are purchased, and blocks are also used - but weren't included in the costings as the ewes hadn't eaten any of them this year.

### Bigton feed costs and prices of inputs:

£6.63	silage
£5.07	nuts
£7	barley
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£18.70	per head
£30/t	- silage
£150/t	- barley
£448/t	- soya
£265/t	- nuts
£150/t	- beet pulp
£225	- max. barley
£346	- protein nuts

### Group feed costs:

£22.90	- barley, nuts, BP, silage, soya
£19.44	- soya, silage
£27	- silage, min. soya, <del>nuts</del> blend (£20/lamb)
£9	- rolls <del>is</del>
£17.94	- rolls + blocks
£26	- max. barley + silage (750)
£22	- nuts, silage, oats (+£2 tubs)
£23.20	- silage, blend, (+£2/3 tubs)
£18.20	- silage + barley blend
£17.33	- silage, nuts, tubs, ewe + lamb mix
£14.90	- barley + nuts
£17.81	- inside silage then nuts
200 ewes with twins	£11. (no tubs)
140 w/ singles	£0
£13.54	- tubs, blend (100 ewes)

- A 2016 study by Steven Thomson of SRUC into the cost of inputs to the islands showed that concentrate feeds are about £30 per tonne higher than the mainland making it crucial to be as efficient as possible regarding the use of concentrates.

Feeding Value	2016 1st cut	2016 2nd cut	2015
Dry Matter %	29.1	28.2	20.6
Energy (MJ/kg DM)	11.4	11.0	11.4
Protein %	7.8	8.5	11.1
Intake Potential %	98	96	84
pH	4.4	4.3	4.1

- Silage analysis for the pit silage at Bigton shows good energy levels, but low protein levels in 2016 cut grass:
- For all the silages on Shetland that were analysed over winter 2016/17, on average, proteins were 108 g/kg DM compared to 120 g/kg in 2016. So Shetland had a 10% drop in protein in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16.

## FARMERS UPDATE Summarise the development of the initiatives on the farm

Aimee gave an update on calving, with recent problems with a cow that had torn ligaments and discussed the use of the calving jack, a creep area for calves, and the cameras for watching cows in the shed

## FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED Provide more detail on the farmer update, whether this is around financials/yield/health

- Scanning results for the Cheviot cross Shetland ewes is good, but the number of lambs reared is low in comparison to scanning.

	2014	2015	2016
No. of Sheep to Ram	217	215	234
Scanning Percentage	167%	156%	157%
No. of lambs reared	285	245	254
Rearing Percentage	131%	114%	109%

- The reasons for the loss of potential lambs is unclear. As well as disease, there are environmental challenges, such as cliffs on the grazing ground on the island.
- This year, Kirsty and Aimee are going to keep a record of losses to try and determine when and why the losses occur, e.g. whether between scanning and lambing, or at lambing, or if it is older lambs that are being lost.



## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES Highlight one specific opportunity or challenge, or two or three smaller ones

The community group discussed:

- Consider the replacement ewes – how they are chosen, what are they fed as ewe hoggs.
- Whether feed costs can be further reduced.
- Methods of feeding DUP pre lambing and what feeds to use

There was also a good bit of fun at the meeting but much of this was lost on Siobhan Macdonald as she struggled with the Shetland dialect.



## ACTIONS FROM MEETING Bullet points outlining what will be done between now and the next meeting

- Record losses at lambing through to sale.
- If not part of your normal feeding programme consider feeding soya to a group of twins for last 3 weeks pre lambing at 200g/ewe.

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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