

## ABOUT SHETLAND MONITOR FARM

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Farm name      | <b>Bigton Farm, Bigton, Shetland, ZE2 9JA</b>                         |
| Meeting Number | <b>07 – Cattle and Sheep Marketing Options</b>                        |
| Meeting Date   | <b>Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> and Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018</b> |
| Next Meeting   | <b>Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2018</b>                            |

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

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

**Crops:** Around 25 hectares of spring barley, 4 hectares of forage rape and 40 hectares of silage as grown.

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

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

### Management Group:

Jamie Leslie (Chairman): Graham Fraser, Kirsty Budge, Aimee Budge, Lauraine Manson, Hilary Burgess, Eric Graham, Jim Tait, John Abernethy, Johnina Henderson, John Sandison, Aaron Sinclair, Ronnie Eunson and Matthew Westmoreland

- On this occasion the meeting was held at Kergord Farm, the Shetland mart and abattoir.
- The first part of the meeting on Sunday started at Kergord to view the growing and finishing cattle belonging to GB & AM Anderson
- The meeting then moved to the Shetland mart where after lunch everyone had the opportunity to grade live lambs
- The group viewed the carcasses of cattle hanging in the abattoir chill from the previous weeks kill, several of which had come from Kergord
- There was a wide selection of types of sheep to grade including pure Shetland, Lleyn cross, Texel, Cheviot and Suffolk cross lambs, older wether hogs and ewes.
- Poppy Frater, sheep specialist with SAC Consulting, gave a presentation on finishing lambs and nutrition.



## KEY MESSAGES

- It is possible to add value to sheep by feeding concentrates and aiming to market them locally in Shetland.
- Getting the correct ration is important for growth rate and profit.
- When assessing if lambs are ready for slaughter, Shetland lambs will nearly always be carrying more condition than they feel, while more muscled lambs such as Texel crosses often feel fatter than they really are.
- There is no such thing as an animal (sheep or cattle) that given suitable feeding cannot yield a useable marketable carcass.



*Rams at Kergord*

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

See section at the end of this report on the lamb finishing at Bigton Farm

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

### Kergord Farm - Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January

- Grant Anderson explained the system at Kergord with animals nearly all purchased locally at the two main cattle sales in April and October. Most of the animals purchased were weaned calves but some more forward stores are also brought in.
- Cattle are fed on pit silage plus a beef stock nut (16% CP) from Harbro. DLWG peak as high as 1.3kg/day but given the wide range of cattle types purchased some only achieve a much more modest 0.7kg/day.
- The farm has an agreement to supply 2-3 cattle per week to one of the local butchers and this presents particular problems as there can frequently be more cattle in a condition ready for slaughter than are needed for the market at a particular point of time.



*Cattle at Kergord*

## Shetland Mart - Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January

Lauraine Manson the manager at the Shetland Abattoir explained the MLC Grading system and those present were split into two groups.

**Group A** went to see and discuss the cattle carcasses in the abattoir chill. These cattle were from the previous weeks slaughter and several of the cattle had come from Kergord Farm.



**Group B** went to the mart pens where the abattoir and several local producers had arranged to have 6 pens of sheep ready for inspection. In each pens the sheep were marked 1-6 of A-F.

Everyone attending was given the opportunity to record what they thought the EUROP conformation class and Fat class would be for each animal to allow follow up on the Monday night.

After 30-40 minutes the two groups swapped over.

## Shetland Mart - Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January

Everyone met back at the mart at 7pm. While half the group immediately went through to the abattoir chill to see the lambs that had been graded live the previous day the others listened to a talk on lamb finishing rations by Poppy Frater.

It was excellent to see how good the carcasses were from the small Shetland lambs. It demonstrated very well how a very low value lamb can be turned into a good carcasse worth enough to easily justify the cost and effort involved in feeding such lambs.



**A big thanks is due to Grant and Brian Anderson from GB & AM Anderson and to Lauraine Manson from the Shetland Abattoir and to Eric Graham for sharing his experiences of finishing lambs in Shetland.**

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

- Another item that came up during the meeting was the feeding of Beef feed products to lambs. This is dangerous as they are not formulated with sheep in mind and may have excessive levels of copper for sheep. Sheep are very prone to copper toxicity, particularly with Texels and Suffolks. Copper toxicity symptoms will come on very suddenly. Affected animals become increasingly weak. Some sheep may spend time wandering aimlessly or head-pressing. As the disease progresses, jaundice develops and breathing becomes shallow and rapid due in part to the development of anaemia.
- Poppy Frater produced the figures below from Bigton Farm as a comparison to Eric Graham's figures that were discussed at the meeting. The figures show that there can be a margin to be made on finishing lambs if you do the job well.

## LAMB FINISHING AT BIGTON FARM

The lamb finishing process for the remaining lambs over the winter at Bigton is as follows:

- Approximately 65 Lambs are put into shed on barley and lamb pellet rations (0.5kg Barley, 0.5kg Lamb pellets and hay) fed using a hopper
- Once the first lot is sold, the next batch will be put though
- The first batch (housed in December) were ready at four weeks but have had to wait an additional two weeks to get them booked in, therefore average finishing period is predicted to be 5 weeks over the three batches
- December lambs weighed around 32kg, we estimate that the latter batches will weigh 34 and 36 kg in February and April respectively (£1.80/kg price assumed for these predictions)

|  | December batch  | January batch   | April batch   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Estimated value pre shed                 | £58   | £61   | £65   |
| Feed (over 5 weeks)                      | 17.5kg Barley<br>17.5 kg lamb pellets<br>Hay <i>ad lib</i><br>Straw <i>ad lib</i> | 17.5kg Barley<br>17.5 kg lamb pellets<br>Hay <i>ad lib</i><br>Straw <i>ad lib</i> | 17.5kg Barley<br>17.5 kg lamb pellets<br>Hay <i>ad lib</i><br>Straw <i>ad lib</i> |
| Feed Cost                                | £11.90  | £11.90  | £11.90  |
| Predicted value<br>(45kg lamb, £1.83/kg) | £82.62  | £82.62  | £82.62  |
| <b>Predicted Gross Margin</b>            | <b>£12.72</b>   | <b>£9.72</b>  | <b>£5.72</b>  |

- Still a decent margin, even in to April, but this does not account for the additional grazing, health and labour costs of these animals

**Note:** The first batch of lambs were sold 8<sup>th</sup> February: 23 lambs at 44kg at £91.50 and 21 at 41kg at £85.50 which is higher than Poppy's predicted value improving the margin further for the December batch.

## LAMB FINISHING AT GREMISTA FARM

The lamb finishing process for the lambs over the winter at Eric Graham's Gremista Farm is as follows:

|                     | Cross Lambs                | Shetland Lambs           |
|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Oct/Nov Value       | £60                        | £12                      |
|                     | 1.5 lb Barley              | 0.85 lb Barley           |
|                     | 1.5 lb Lamb feeder (grays) | 0.85 lb Lamb feeder      |
|                     | Straw                      | Straw                    |
|                     | Silage (11.3 ME 12% CP)    | Silage (11.3 ME, 12% CP) |
| Feed Cost           | £15                        | £8                       |
| Jan value           | £90                        | £45                      |
| <b>Gross Margin</b> | <b>£15</b>                 | <b>£25</b>               |

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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