

ABOUT SHETLAND MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Bigton Farm, Bigton, Shetland, ZE2 9JA
Meeting Number	08 – Health Planning, Marketing Shetland Hill Lamb & Opportunities for young people
Meeting Date	Saturday 17th March 2018
Next Meeting	Saturday 2nd June 2018

Kirsty and Aimee Budge are the 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-bye 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, Shorthorn or Charolais cross 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

- Gary Mitchell, dairy farmer and NFUS vice president spoke about his start in farming, what he gained from the Rural Leadership Programme and about encouraging young people into agriculture.
- Zoe Symington, a NSA young ambassador, explained her role to promote the sheep industry and opportunities for young people.
- Jim Tait explained the SAHPS recording system for animal health and how it can reduce losses and save costs.
- Eric Graham extolled the benefits of selling finished Shetland Hill Lamb.
- The group visited Bigton Farm and viewed the new NZ Suffolk tup, Charollais and Shorthorn bulls and their EBVs, and the finishing lambs.
- 42 farmers and crofters attended the meeting.



*Above. Gary Mitchell, NFUS Vice President
Right. Zoe Symington, NSA Young Ambassador*

KEY MESSAGES

- Finishing lambs can be profitable if control kept on cost and disease.
- Cooperation benefits producers in sale price and reduced bulk buying costs for finishing.
- Kirsty and Aimee find it hugely beneficial to sit with vet each year to update their health plan.
- Recording production on SAHPS provides benchmarks and helps highlight improvements
- Gary Mitchell stated sharing his benchmarking figures with others was like being at a nudist camp on the first day, but had definitely changed his business for the better

FARMERS UPDATE



Lamb crop

258 lambs were weaned from 210 ewes lambing – 123% weaning, 13% up from last year.

80 lambs still in the shed on pellets and barley and hay.

Bigton lamb sales through the mart varied from £60 in September to £107.50 in March. Lambs are sold through mart as not confident in their assessments for finishing, but confident that the system is profitable.

Tupping

Raddled weeks two and three with different colours – this will help to sort the ewes into different groups at lambing time. Also helps monitor ram performance. Didn't lose any ewes this year over the banks as all ewes were tupped off the isle.

One NZ Suffolk ram used (bought from John Scott) – went to mostly gimmers. Happy with him so far but he is quite wild and difficult to catch to raddle. Will wait and see how his offspring perform, but would consider buying more of these hardy types.



Scanned at 169% which is the best result in a long time.

	Calving Ease	Calving Ease	Calving Ease	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	EBV	EBV	EBV	EBV	EBV	EBV	EBV	EBV	EBV	EBV
March 2018 Beef Shorthorn										
FARM KIM OCHERIE	+2.5	+2.2	-1.3	+1.4	+2.9	+4.1	+5.1	-	+9	+0.7
EBV	88%	41%	64%	78%	72%	70%	66%	-	53%	72%
Breed Avg EBVs for 2016 Born Calves	-0.8	-0.4	-0.2	+1.7	+1.7	+2.8	+3.6	+3.8	+5	+0.1

Cattle

74 cows were scanned. 5 empty (2 heifers)

New Shorthorn bull purchased. EBVs predict good calving ease but yet to be proven

Barley

There's a local demand for barley, so increasing the area of barley grown this year – risky crop to grow in Shetland but good cash returns throughout winter. Looking to join Scottish Quality Crops – this would allow us to sell to local feed merchants that are under the QMS feed scheme.

This Farming Life

Stars in the making. Coming to a TV near you soon.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Selling Shetland Hill Lamb finished versus store

The Shetland Monitor Farm has a sub-group with the overall aim to encourage the production of better quality Shetland hill lambs and improve returns.

In line with the Monitor Farm experience of finishing lambs, Eric Graham discussed the pros and cons of finishing pure Shetland Hill lamb. Shetland Lamb has a PDO, so there are opportunities for adding value but there are also opportunities for improving returns through sending fat lambs away to the mainland with a bit of co-operation.

A Shetland weaned hill lamb in September might be worth £12, however with only £8 of concentrate and silage feed, would sell for £45. Further improvements could be made to margins by using forage crops such as forage rape or swedes, or improving grass with plantain for cheaper feed costs and faster finishing.

When doing costings, losses and additional vet costs, need to be taken into account. Care is required in getting small newly weaned lambs onto concentrate or forage crop rations.

There are opportunities for cooperation in:

- Provision of forage crops on the farms with better ground
- Amalgamating lorry loads for transport of livestock
- Joint buying of feed in bulk to negotiate lower prices
- Marketing of Shetland hill lamb through the Food Group



Eric Graham's Shetland hill lambs

	Growth Potential Per Lamb g/day	Days to Grazing from Sowing	No of lambs/ha for 100 days
Forage Rape	270	90-110	23
Swedes	200-250	170-250	54
Stubble Neeps	200-250	60-100	34
Grass	300		

For further info: please see Taste of Shetland (Jill Franklin), AHDB publication on Brassica crops and the QMS video on the potential of turnips as a winter feed.

Trace elements in ewes

Ewes were blood tested after weaning and found to be low in selenium. Ewes were split and Group 1 had a selenium bolus and Group 2 had a 3 in 1 bolus (Selenium, copper & cobalt). Scanning results were exactly the same! Not an accurate trial as ewes on different grazing and not an exact split with age of ewes.

Discussions surrounded whether to bolus again now, pre lambing, or wait until weaning, and whether the ewes really needed the bolus.

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

- Barley trials. Four 1- acre plots, trialling:
 1. Golden Promise. Old traditional variety, grown here in the 1980s
 2. Fairing. Earliest of the new varieties and has some of the strongest agronomic features and would be a baseline for modern genomes. However, it is not the highest yielder and is a specialist variety for grain distilling (although that has no impact on its feed value).
 3. Anneli (2-row).
 4. Brage. (Brag)
- Investigate lamb weighing equipment and electronic identification for better control of weight gains and margin on costs.

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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