

ABOUT SHETLAND MONITOR FARM

Farm name	Bigton Farm, Bigton, Shetland, ZE2 9JA
Meeting Number	09 – Grazing Management with Trevor Cook
Meeting Date	Sunday 3rd June 2018
Next Meeting	Saturday 25th August 2018



Land: Two units are run together, covering 305 ha of in-by and rough grazing.
Crops: 24 ha of spring barley is being grown this year of which 4ha is undersown with grass.
Silage: 32ha of silage to be cut.
Cattle: 69 Suckler Cows plus 29 replacement bulling heifers - Shorthorn x Saler cows producing Saler, Shorthorn or Charolais x calves which are sold store or finished.
Sheep: 265 Shetland x Cheviot breeding ewes which are put to a Suffolk tup. Also running 211 replacement ewe lambs which is high due to the aim of increasing sheep numbers but some may be sold as gimmers in the back end.

Management group members are:

Jamie Leslie (Chairman), Graham Fraser, Kirsty Budge, Aimee Budge, Lauraine Manson: Hestigarth, Walls and Shetland Livestock Marketing Group, Hilary Burgess, Eric Graham, Jim Tait, John Abernethy, Johnina Henderson, Yell, John Sandison, Bigton, Aaron Sinclair, Jacob Eunson and Matthew Westmoreland

KEY MESSAGES

To Make Profit from Pasture

- Grow lots of pasture
- Utilise over 80% of pasture grown
- Allocate the minimum amount of pasture to achieve the production objectives.

Maximising Ewe Performance: The Drivers of High Production

- number of lambs weaned
- weight of lambs
- consistency



AREAS OF DISCUSSION

The components of high production and high profit and the drivers of these

- Scanning percentage – fecundity
- Lamb survival
- Lamb growth rate

Drivers

- Genetics – sets the potential
- Feeding
- Management – expresses the potential
- Animal health

FARMERS UPDATE

Cattle

- Calving went well overall 90% calving re- cows to bull including two losses from abortions and one dead calf from a caesarean.
- 4 calves died later – 1 hole in stomachs, 2 infections, 1 twisted gut
- Calving periods exclude 2 late heifers & late cow – Are late cows worth it?
- All bulls in for 10-12 weeks in summer
- Problems with retained cleanings – possible link to mineral deficiencies in vitamin e and selenium
- Navel ill – poor stockmanship at beginning of calving – use of antibiotics

Sheep

- Lambing % has been lifted from 144% in 2017 to 156% in 2018
- No of lambs weaning lifted from 110% in 2016 to 128% in 2017.
- Lambing went well with generally good weather apart from a couple of nasty wet nights

Crops

- Barley was all sown in good time and the plots for the Variety resilience trials have been established and are looking good.

Presentations from this and previous meetings can be found at
<http://www.monitorfarms.co.uk/hub/shetland-mf-meeting-reports-2018>

FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

Sheep	QMS Top Third	2017 Bigton	2018 Bigton
Scanning %	170	163	169
Lambing %	155	144	~156

Cattle	2018 Bigton
Scanning %	93%
Calving %	97%
% calving in 1 st 3 weeks	52%
Heifers	67%
Cows to SH bull	79%
Cows to CH bull	48%
Cows to Macbeth	14%

There was a good discussion around tightening up the calving and how to boost herd fertility by identifying and culling below average cows.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

Targets for Bigton

- Sheep enterprise to be in the top third of the QMS figures.
- Barley will yield at 2 ton/acre
- Both suckler cow herds will be Johnes risk level 1

ACTIONS FROM MEETING

- Set up rotational grazing
- Look after barley trial plots
- Consider possible early weaning of a proportion of lambs
- Consider providing more shelter of ewes at lambing time next year

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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