

## ABOUT SUTHERLAND MONITOR FARM

Farm name **Clynelish Farm, Brora, Sutherland, KW9 6LR**

Meeting Number **02 – Ewe Management for Lambing**

Meeting Date **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

Next Meeting **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Clynelish Farm is a 125-hectare farm run by Jason Ballantyne and his wife Vic, in partnership with Jason's dad Murdo.

**Cattle:** The family run 80 suckler cows with calves sold store at 10 months of age. Cows are all out-wintered.

**Sheep:** There is a flock of 900 breeding ewes, of which about half are Lairg type Cheviots and the other half Lleyn cross, currently lamb outdoors at the end of April.



Unusually for the area, the cattle and sheep enterprises are both on forage based diets with virtually no concentrate feeding.



### Management Group:

John Scott (Chair)

Rory MacKenzie, Sheena MacKenzie, Brian MacLeod, Joyce Campbell, Danny Miller, Iain MacKenzie, Donald Ross

*Picture: Rhidian Jones (guest speaker) and Jason Ballantyne discussing the forage requirements during the meeting*

## KEY MESSAGES

- Use the QMS “Ewe nutrition and body condition scoring timeline” for year-round management of body condition.
- Feeding for good lamb birthweights (1 kg at birth equates to an extra 3.4 kg at weaning) improved lamb vigour (stands quicker increasing survivability, suckles sooner, produces more heat), more and better quality colostrum. Still need to bear in mind the basics of body condition, forage quality, stage of pregnancy, number of lambs carried etc.
- Rules of thumb for feeding soya to sheep in the last 3-4 weeks of pregnancy are 100g/hd/day/lamb carried, fed instead of compound feed if ewes are fit or in addition to the compound if they are lean. Halve the amount if protected soya is used.
- Most of the country is deficient in cobalt which is crucial for high lamb growth rates once grass dependent. There are several options available so the problem should be pre-empted rather than solved by using boluses, (frequent) liquid drenches, injection of long acting vitamin B12 or application of cobalt salts to grassland in fertiliser.

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

- Over 30 farmers enjoyed a lively discussion with the Ballantynes mainly on the sheep management feeding at Clynelish farm for the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of this Monitor Farm project.
- Rhidian Jones of RJ Livestock systems joined Jason and Victoria to discuss the forage requirements of the ewes following his presentation of Ewe management. A summary of Rhidian’s talk is available separately.
- Victoria presented the scanning results from 2017 along with comparisons from previous years.
- Jason presented the details of the cattle feeding regime, along with weight gains.
- Like the launch meeting, a very open and positive meeting with good interaction from the whole community group with good technical information provided.



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

- First Management Group meeting has been held and a Chairperson (John Scott) elected.
- Have tested blood tested some cows – awaiting results

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

- Scanning completed at Clynelish and at 152% the Ballantynes were disappointed with this figure. 6.8% were empty.
- The ambition is to get lambing percentage to 170%.
- Calves have averaged 1.25kg/day since 7 Feb
- Average 42kg in 34 days
- Steers – 1.31 kg /Day, Heifers – 1.15 kg/ Day
- Nearly the same across all breeds!
- Sale date – Friday 24 March

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

The recommendation from the community group regarding the Clynelish sheep system are as follows:

- **Scanning Results?**  
A clear recommendation to increase number of tups to reduce tup:ratio which is 1:70 at present. The group also suggested that that ewe hogg management could be improved, and recommended that blood sampling is carried out on some of the barren ewes.
- **What breed and how many different breeds?**  
Discussion on the number of different breeds as well as whether Cheviots are the right type for the land at Clynelish.

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

- A plan for silage fields to try and improve silage quality
- Herbage test on early spring grass
- Blood test ewes for energy (beta hydroxy buturate) and protein (blood urea).
- Liver biopsy of cows to check status.
- Bulls tested for campylobacter.

## FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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