

## ABOUT SUTHERLAND MONITOR FARM

Farm name	<b>Clynelish Farm, Brora, Sutherland, KW9 6LR</b>
Meeting Number	<b>12 – Taking stock this winter – Nutrition and feeding and planning ahead.</b>
Meeting Date	<b>Wednesday 12 December 2018</b>
Next Meeting	<b>Wednesday 13 February 2019</b>

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.



Nick Canning from Harbro talking about rationing

**Management Group:**

John Scott (Chair)  
 Rory MacKenzie, Sheena MacKenzie, Brian MacLeod, Danny Miller, Iain MacKenzie, Donald Ross

## KEY MESSAGES

Nick Cannon gave a very interesting and thought-provoking talk about planning forage feeding this winter. With the unusually dry summer there is not the same quantity of winter forage on farms. Does your farm have enough forage – if not what can be done- which type of stock do you have, and which stock should you prioritise? To monitor improvements on your farm and stock what indicators do you use to measure improvements?

Nick also posed the question about the percentage of losses between scanning and weaning- what can be done to prevent the losses?

After lunch Victoria and Jason gave us an update of what's been happening at Clynelish.

In groups, attendees listed the changes they have implemented and what were the benefits of attending the Monitor farm meeting.

The groups also got a chance to put forward their ideas for changes that Clynelish could implement over the next 12 months.

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Nick Cannon began with a step by step guide on how to calculate the amount of forage feed in their silage pits and bales. He encouraged attendees to group stock and list them in priority order. Which group of stock require forage? Are there any that could move to a cereal based diet. Once this had been done if there was a forage shortage then a plan could be implemented to prevent any issues.

Nick gave ideas on how to monitor stock and see that they are performing- he emphasised the importance of keeping recording methods simple and relevant and of using data that is recorded.

Feeding the rumen is very important as stimulation of the rumen improves energy and protein supply from existing forages. The optimum rumen pH is 7 but silage and propionic acid treated grain are acidic.

Feed efficiency decreases with the age and feed is better utilised in young livestock.

As the ewe develops in pregnancy the growing foetus reduces the animals ability to eat bulky feeds but she still needs the correct energy to grow a lamb that will survive but not have a negative impact on herself.

After birth the lamb requires good quality colostrum and needs to be strong to get up and suckling. By pass proteins benefits include lamb growth, colostrum production, immune function and milk production. A supplementary feed in addition to forage would have many benefits.

After lunch attendees were asked to share any changes, big or small, good or bad they had made to their farming practices from what they had seen/heard at previous Monitor farm meetings. This stimulated a lot of chatter within and between the break out groups when the lists were feedback to the meeting. The second part was for attendees to share what they thought the benefits were to them attending the Monitor Farm meetings with many citing the same benefits.

Looking forward to 2019 the groups were charged with the task to think of scenarios that could be implemented on Clynelish. Again, this generated an engaging discussion with the groups and several scenarios were proposed.

Key scenarios suggested and discussed are below and Jason and Vic are to come back to the group with their preferred options to action for the rest of the Monitor Farm project.

### Scenario/options suggested by the community group

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cull empty cows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve ewe fertility</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sell all the cows- buy calves to winter &amp; finish at grass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce creep</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve tick control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract finishing lambs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sell calves in Autumn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with distillery – farm tours/tasting etc</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease cow numbers</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change to one breed of cow (eg stabiliser)</li> </ul>	

After the group sessions attendees were asked to complete the QMS Annual feedback form where they could give their answers from a more personal perspective.

## FARMERS UPDATE

### Sheep

- Tups are out 26<sup>th</sup> November for 25 days
- 890 ewes (60 less than last year) to 17 tups
- No hoggs are to be tupped this year
- Would have liked more grass
- Leaner ewes brought home early and put on the fodder beet to add condition
- Lambs took a long time to recover from tick issue- hope this will not affect the lambs long term
- Gimmers that were away at grazing got fluke- mainly due to normally wet areas being dry enough to graze

### Cattle

- Weaned calves on 19<sup>th</sup> October
- Average 150 days
- 220kg Average
- 200 days kg = 290kg
- 1.2kg/day
- Been given a dose for fluke and worms
- On a diet of Draff, beetplup, minerals, silage and soya
- Bought 20 calves in Average £530
- Cows PD and 10 empty from 80
- 2 Charolais bulls lamed during bulling period
- Of the 10 empty 4 sold 2 will finish and 4 keep

### Grass

- Not as much as would like but never got going again after dry summer
- Still growing now though!
- Fertiliser was applied on 1<sup>st</sup> September

- Ewes to be kept on good grass until mid-Jan when hopefully move onto maintenance ration
- Had difficulty shutting off grass this year but hoping reduced stock numbers in 2019 will help
- Have enough feed at the moment

## Other stuff

- Still searching for workable weigh and handling system
- Will raise working height of main race to prevent bending
- New fank at Club has been great
- Drone has been purchased and been out a few times- practice required
- Shed extension has been completed
- Brambury hill has been fenced- dividing it

## FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

- The number of empty cows- and the number culled- why keep four?
- Tick issue with the lambs- what impact if any will it have on the size of them next year- will they be big enough for tugging
- Why buy in calves? Risk of introducing health problems to unit
- Calves were weaned 2-3 weeks earlier and are slightly heavier
- Given 2 Charolais bulls went lame- should bulls been left out for longer?

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Monitor the winter forage to plan for shortages
- Grass is still growing- hopefully winter forage will go further
- Practice with drone and master it for 2019

## ACTIONS FROM MEETING

- Find suitable weigh head and handling system
- Review buying in calves- risk of health problems
- Review if the four empty cows should be kept
- Scenarios to be documented and investigated for the next meeting in February.

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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