

## ABOUT SUTHERLAND MONITOR FARM

Farm name	<b>Clynelish Farm, Brora, Sutherland, KW9 6LR</b>
Meeting Number	<b>09 – Profit from Pasture</b>
Meeting Date	<b>Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018</b>
Next Meeting	<b>Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018 – Community Group Farm Visit</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.

### Management Group:

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

## KEY MESSAGES

The key messages delivered by guest speaker Trevor Cook from this meeting on profit from pasture were:

- Pasture is the cheapest feed
- Fencing has the power to improve pasture
- Know what your pasture requirements are today and, in the future, - look at last year's requirements
- Introduce flexibility and a buffer into your system
- If things aren't going right (weather, market prices) accept that you aren't going to make the profit you want too but adapt to maximise the profit that you can make.

## AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Trevor Cook opened the meeting by asking why his knowledge of New Zealand agriculture was relevant in Scotland- it is because that all over the world profit is determined by the same factors

- Price and quantity of the sold product
- Cost of producing that product
- Being able to repeat that profit

Pasture is the cheapest feed farmers can utilise. Over the years farmers have become focused on price per head but should be maximising output per hectare. This can be done by focusing on controlled or rotational grazing.



*NZ Grassland Specialist Trevor Cook*

To maximise profit from pasture Trevor gave “The big 5” areas to look at:

- Feed budget
- Control over allocation
- Knowing about today
- Flexible stocking system
- Fertile soils

**Feed budgeting** – to do this you need to know what you have and what your stock require.

Control over your allocation- you need to be in control of access and the size of the area of pasture.

Knowing about today- you need to know how your stock are performing as this will determine if you need to make changes to the allocation of pasture.

**Flexibility**- where are the buffers? Is it in animal performance? Can you decrease the number/type of stock? Or do you introduce supplementary feeding?

Fertile soils- to maximise pasture your soil needs to be in good condition.

Trevor concluded the meeting by saying to make profit from pasture you need to grow lots of pasture, utilise 80% of the pasture grown and allocate the least amount of pasture needed to achieve the production objectives.

After lunch we had a tour of the Clynelish fields which are used as part of a controlled grazing system and Trevor gave hints and tips to Jason and Victoria about when to move the 300 ewes with lambs at foot. He also encouraged them to introduce cattle to the field when the sheep are moved off and they will tidy up the remaining grass. But our first stop was to a field of newly sown fodder beet, this is the first time Clynelish has grown this crop but the potential feed and level of dry matter was very attractive.

## FARMERS UPDATE

Jason and Victoria gave an update on Clynelish which centred on lambing, calving, pasture and crops

Lambing got off to a slow start but picked up and was steady with good weather which was a big help.

- Lambs Scanned – 1479 (149%) and Lambs Marked- 1344 (143%)
- Good selection of females
- Ewes not milking as well as usual
- Not tugging hoggs next year
- Rams out earlier to Cheviot Gimmers
- 25 days tugging period (weather permitting)
- Lambing at the club went well- more to lamb there in 2019

Cows were turned out on 27<sup>th</sup> April and started calving on 5<sup>th</sup> May

- 41 of 66 calved in the first 3 weeks
- Problems with sucking early on- possibly poor feed quality before turn-out
- Usual anomalies and problems
- Three abortions in March/April
- Trialling Campylobacter vaccine- will report
- Three sets of twins not scanned
- Last 10 cows fenced in to control condition
- Considering future mineral use- to help with vigour
- 3<sup>rd</sup> bull purchased (a Charolais) 82 cows next year
- Reasonable cull list again- three T's
- Good selection of stabiliser females
- Need to increase scanning and survival
- Extra plastic to improve silage condition and minimise spoilage

Pasture and Crops

- Later shutting sheep off the fields
- Had enough at lambing- just! Mid April warmth
- Fertiliser on 15 March 125kg + 250kg/ha CAN
- Good growth since then but staying on top of it
- Cutting fields on 2 May- earliest date in years
- Fence up at Club to improve sward and control
- Will bale a small area, need to keep eye on it

- Ewes grouped into three approx. 300 +lambs
- Fodder beet in – 6ha- (cvs Bolero and Geronimo). Sowed with fertiliser, sprayed, fertiliser, spray
- Swedes 6ha – cows- trialling a stale seed bed
- 28 tonnes lime (2.5t/ha) on forage crops
- 4.5ha of new grass- organic type of mix - 4.5ha will be burnt off and direct drill reseed
- Dung all spread or ploughed in

## FACTS & FIGURES DISCUSSED

Winter costs were discussed.

### Cows

- Bought in 145 bales as £16/bale-some of dubious quality
- Distillery was closed- so no draff was available
- Turned out on 27 April (fertiliser on 15 March)

### Sheep

- Bought in 51 tonnes of swedes £35/tome = £1785 (+£300 haulage)
- Used 135 bales of silage-(usually approx. 60)
- Extra grazing = 300 ewes- 50p/ewe/week for 8 weeks = £1200 (+£300 haulage)
- Bagged feed = £520 (2 tonnes)
- One tonne of sheep licks (Crystalyx Lifeline) = £840

Total extra cost of winter feed not incurred in a normal year

- Cows = £2300
- Ewes = £5000
- £5/lamb over £1000 lambs (profit?)
- Do we plan for these years or a 'normal' year.
- Extra winter forage already planned

Calf sales sold 23 March

- Average age - 9.5 months
- Average Kg – 363 (increase of 27kg)
- Average £ - 854 (decrease of £4)
- Average 1.1kg life DLWG
- Heavier, but less money – not sure why- Less Charolais, more Angus, too many breeds?
- We were happy with calves and condition but still need to lift bottom 20%

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Victoria and Jason use the profit from pasture (ie grazing) to increase DLWG and the amount of winter forage
- Rotate more frequently
- Introduce cattle after sheep
- Fencing options- new fencing on the market

## ACTIONS FROM MEETING

- Maximise the profit from pasture. Erect new fencing and water troughs to enable this
- Use innovation fund to get weighing equipment and a drone

### FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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