



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

ARGYLLSHIRE

Management Group Meeting
Report
27 August 2024



MEETING REPORT

Sheep Special Meeting

27 members of the farming community attended the meeting.

Our guest speakers were SAC Nutritionist, Lorna Shaw and Vet, Beth Newman.

MONITOR FARM UPDATE

By Craig Archibald

- Rotational grazing has been going okay and cows looking well. Requiring some thought as to the water supply for next year, amount, pressure, trough locations, connectors etc.
- How fields are set up and gate positions will need to be looked at too.
- Need some kind of record so everyone knows where the cows are going and when.
- Batches of 80 cows will go into 10 acre fields once the bulls are pulled off around 10 September. This will make it easier to feed draff.
- When we go to speaning weights and cow fertility, and how long we graze through, that will give us an idea of value for money of the rotational grazing system. Michale Blanche is continuing to support.

FARM FACTS

- Farmers: The Archibald Family – Craig, Petra, Kieran, Niamh & Innes
- **2012** Hectares farmed – **1493ha** rough/**479ha** pasture/**19ha** barley/**22ha** wood – Tenanted/rented
- **1050** Hill ewes on and finished lambs
- **225** Angus cows selling yearling stores
- Barley grown for distillery
- Oyster farm and café



- Looking at maybe getting some electric fencing to move cows onto the dunes again to get some grass growth in the fields for Spring ready for cows and calves going out.
- Soil testing of a few fields and some reseed or overseed. Maybe a trial of half and half.
- Weed wiper/sprayer and topping system needs looked at.
- Not required as much topping this year.

Tup MOT's – Beth Newman MRCVS

Tup MOT's

Beth discussed the value of Tup MOT's and demonstrated how these should be carried out and what to look for.

Teeth

- Check the teeth and mouth for missing teeth and abscesses as well as abnormalities such as overshot/undershot jaw.

Testicles

- Testicles should be firm but springy, equal, heavy, smooth and move freely.
- Watch out for small testicles (one or both) or hard and enlarged testicle(s) which suggests inflammation. The epididymis, located at the bottom of each testicle, should be equal in size and smooth.
- Measure testicles.
- Check for scrotal hernias, appearing as a soft swelling above the testicles.
- Check for woolly scrotums, these can affect the ability of the scrotum to keep the testes cool.
- Check for abnormalities to the prepuce, such as ulcers, swellings, orf, discharge or blood.
- Check the penis for growths, adhesions, deviation or loss of urethral process at the tip.

Tone

- Aim for Body Condition Score (BCS) 3.5 – 4.

Toes

- Lameness is a big cause of reduced fertility, look for any abnormality in the limbs. Check the feet for any scald, footrot or CODD.

Other

- Check for cracks and infection at the base of horns, any CLA (*Caseous Lymphadenitis*) abscesses around throat and neck, or sunburn/photosensitized skin.
- Check the brisket for any painful sores that can reduce desire to work.
- Check for wool loss and irritation which may be due to scab, lice, bacterial dermatitis.

More Information: [Tupping Toolkit](#) | [Helping farmers in Scotland](#) | [Farm Advisory Service \(fas.scot\)](#)



Sheep Strategy for the Farm

Lorna Shaw – SAC Ruminant Nutritionist

Lorna had spent the day previous helping at lamb weaning and discussing a practical sheep strategy for the Argyllshire Monitor farm. The details are set out in the Appendix.

One of the key outputs was to select, not only the largest lambs for replacements, but to choose large twin lambs. This would help increase the prolificacy of the flock. – ‘you get what you select for’ so by picking the largest lambs, by default you are most likely selecting singles to breed from.



Lorna Shaw discusses the sheep strategy with the group.



As always, our thanks are extended to the Archibald family for being such fantastic hosts and to Oyster Shed team for the provision of a lovely lunch. Also, to the wonderful farming community for their valued input and support of the Monitor Farm programme.

The next meeting will be on Friday 27 September at 9.30am.

Craigens Farm Visit 26/08/24 –27/08/24: Ewe Production System and Gimmering Plan Summary – Lorna Shaw (SAC Consulting)

Background

Logie and Aberfield Rams were bought last year and put to 100 blackface ewes (and some cheviots) following the sheep specialist plan carried out by Daniel Stout.

The cross lambs produced were born this lambing season and have just been weaned so this first crop will be put to the tup 2025 for lambs born in 2026.

We discussed a future plan to how we integrate these cross-ewes into the flock and our performance goals for the future. We also need to winter these ewes and ensure we have sufficient feed to take a larger ewe through to lambing.

Current Performance

The current ewe number at scanning was 1050 scanning 137% with an expected lamb crop at scanning 1444 lambs. At marking, we had 931 ewes marked with 1170 lambs. This meant a loss of 119 ewes from scanning, 89 of those were barren and removed from the flock post scan meaning 30 ewes were lost between scanning and marking, 15 of which were lost in ditches.

Current Sheep Performance Vs Targets

<u>KPI</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Target</u>
Scanning %	137%	160%
Barren Ewes %	8.4%	2%
Lambs lost (Scanning to Marking) %	18%	10 – 12%
Ewe Deaths to Marking (ex Empties)	30 (3.2%)	0 – 2.5%

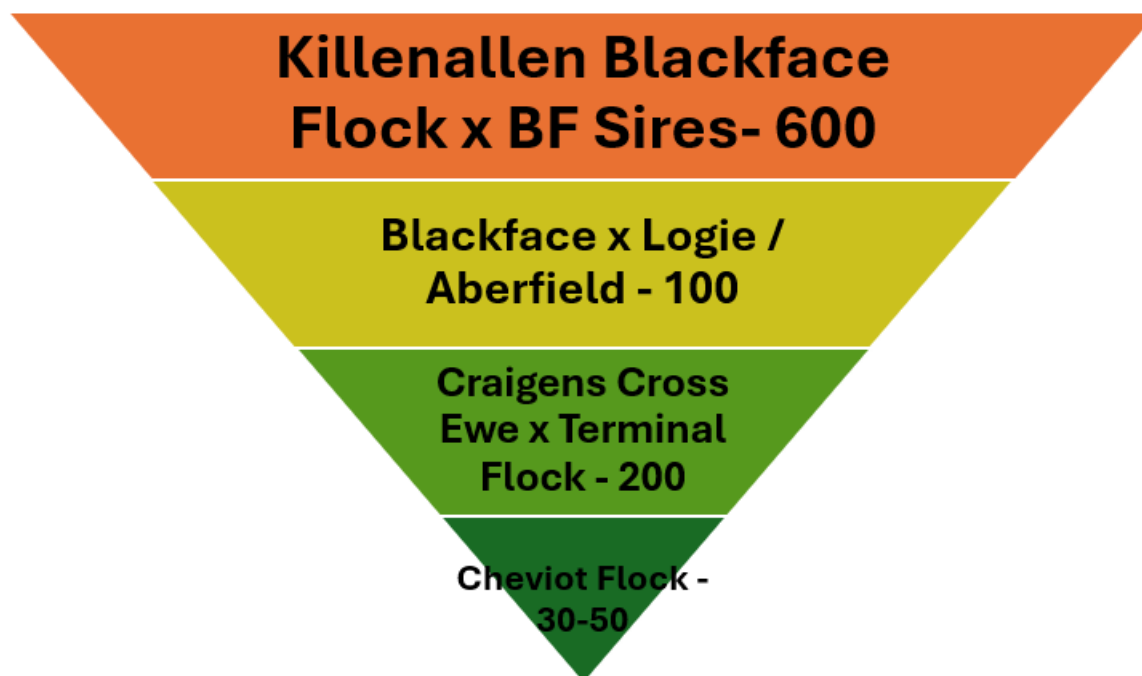
Lamb Deaths

- 41 lambs lost in dead ewes – over half of ewe deaths in ditches discussed exploring options to fence off problem areas particularly at Craigens.
- Black loss an issue on island also

Discussed Key Goals

- Simplify the system
- Can we keep production from less ewes to reduce winter feed reliance
- Explore wintering opportunities – what is the best use for forage crop?

System Plan – The below graphic highlights the discussed plan for the sheep flock at Killenallen / Craigens. Keeping the system stratified ensures we are limiting bought-in replacements to limit health challenges. The aim is to reduce ewes numbers from 1050 to around 950 (inc cheviots) aiming for a scan (all farm) of 160% to keep production the same. Keeping the cross flock at around 200 will ease the feed pressure to keep a larger ewe on the farm over winter.



Other notes

- Discussed potential own market for BF x Logie/Aber as salt marsh lamb sold through the Oyster Shed.
- Wintering of cross ewes on deferred grazing at Craigens feeding bales in ring feeders, potential for hard standing feed areas beside track to limit poaching, ease feed out and also pressure on ewe's feet etc.
- The Archibald's have tried other sheep up the hill, but the blackface suits the system best keeping flock BF flock at 700 total (100 to be crossed) will ease winter pressure on the hill while still managing it effectively.

Replacement Ewe Lamb Selection

- Aim for 60% of ewes mature weight at 7 months Old
- 80% of mature weight at tupping (gimmer).
- Continue to mark singles and twins to prioritise selection of lambs from twin bearing ewes to try and boost prolificacy in the flock.

- BF lambs were 53% of mature weight on visit on track ensure these lambs can continue to gain over winter.
- Cheviots were just under although there was a large variation of mature weight of the cheviot ewes
- Cross lambs were also well grown and on track for weight goals for breeding at time of visit.

Store lambs

- Do we consider feeding store lambs post weaning to optimise growth while efficiency is still higher rather than push weight gain during winter as efficiency is dropping?
- Aiming for store sales before the end of the year to ease winter pressure on ewes and replacements.
- This would also ease the store's requirement of fodder crop freeing it up to take ewe lambs or some ewes through the winter instead.





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To find out more or to sign up, please contact:

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