



Meeting kindly sponsored by



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

ROXBURGHSHIRE

2nd Meeting Report

15 June 2023



Soils, Grazing & Biodiversity

Around 40 members of the farming community attended the meeting.

The afternoon was full of discussion looking at:

- **Soil health with Ray field**
- **Grazing management with Rhidian Jones of RJ Livestock Systems Ltd**
- **Biodiversity with Robert Wilson and Rob Playfair-Hannay**

Ray Field is a former farm manager at Lilburn Estates in Northumberland operating over 30,000 acres. He has also worked as an agronomist for Agrovista.

Ray talked about sampling, structure, soil elements, cultivation and more.

Rays top 3 tips



Farm Facts

- **182** hectares split across 2 units
- Additional **60** hectares of arable contract farmed
- Closed herd of **100 pure Hereford** sucklers
- Producing pedigree stock, some finished cattle and some stores
- Crops grown include winter **wheat**, spring **barley**, Kale, stubble turnips and forage rye.

1 Get a **comprehensive soil test** including organic matter done on your fields every 5yrs. 1/5 of the farm each year and use GPS or What3words so you can monitor changes do a at least 1 composite sample per Ha.

2 Ensure the major **soil elements are in balance** to ensure efficient use of fertiliser and manures. i.e. none of the major elements are deficient




3 When reseeding or carrying out significant cultivations dig holes and **examine the soil structure for compaction** look for earthworms and that the previous crop roots have not been impeded. **Choose a good area and a poor area to look at.**

Grazing and Grassland efficiency



Rhidian Jones- RJ Livestock Systems Ltd

Decide whether rotational grazing is something you are going to be able to commit to and what classes of livestock, it all depends on your farm and the goal. Think about learning in 3 levels:

-  Bronze: **Listening** to someone talk about rotational grazing.
-  Silver: **Visiting** someone who already does rotational grazing
-  Gold: **Doing it yourself**, its best learned on the job once you have the foundations.



Feed Budget

A good grass cover in a meadow field = **2500-3000 KgDM/ha or approx. 8-10 cm**

Allocate 3% of bodyweight and graze to a residual of **1500-1700 KgDM/ha or approx. 3-5 cm**.



UME is the ultimate measure of grassland efficiency- takes the amount of ME required by all the livestock for a year, then deducts all purchased energy

You can achieve a **20%** increase in grass growth and stocking rates by using a rotational system.



Grass grazed down to **1600 KgDM/ha or approx. 4cm**

Biodiversity and next steps?

Robert and Rob gave us an insight into how the implementation of the **AECS** has proved to be a win-win situation for both them and the environment. Through thoughtful planning they have not only **improved the productivity of the poorest areas of their farm** but also demonstrated how sustainable agriculture practices go hand in hand with biodiversity conservation.

Robert has had a water pipe installed through the AECS scheme which now opens up several fields to rotational grazing where water was the sole restriction before.



Next steps for Cowbog include

- Continuing to test out rotational grazing and see what works best for the farm and each field.
- Work on improving soil health in the grazing fields across the farm



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