



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

**Deeside Monitor Farm Open Meeting
Meikle Maldron, Torphins
Jamie Leslie - Decision Making is Key
8th July 2026**



Grassland Decisions

Jamie Leslie, a [Farmers Weekly Mixed Farmer of the Year](#), and Duncan Morrison are in a [Farmax](#) group, where decision making is the core discussion.

Forecasting grass covers and supply is important. Jamie says, 'It's the grass that tells you when to act.. Adaptability is key'.

Jamie discussed how to manage grass covers on a farm,

- He regularly records covers across the farm
- He compares the figures to historic data and average grass growths
- He manages surpluses and deficits in supply and demand of feed
- He uses Farmax software to create a grazing plan

Scholland Scenarios

Discussing scenarios from his own Scholland Farm in Shetland, he explained decisions he needs to make through a year. He can't afford to be rigid:

- Apply nitrogen the springtime if short of feed
- Don't apply N where there's an excess of springtime grass in the springtime
- Through the summer, balance out surpluses by making more silage or buying in stock. Through the autumn, trade stock in response to available feed.
- A deficit of grass triggers sales of his feeder ewes or store cattle
- Jamie prioritises his breeding stock.



Prices and Affordability

Jamie then covered the values of breeding stock. The Monitor Farm audience provided him with their estimated values for bulling heifers, in calf heifers, and heifers with calf at foot, young pregnant cows and cull cows.

The discussion highlighted the current market prices that people are willing to pay for each.

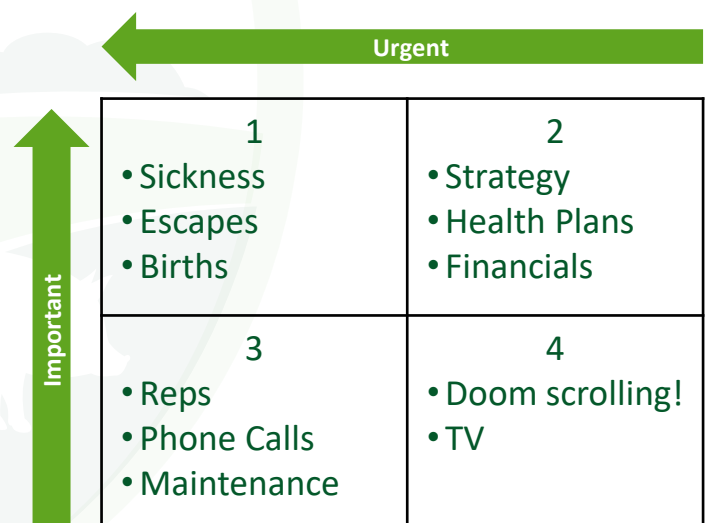
Jamie concludes that if you're not willing to buy animals at their current market value, potentially you can't afford to own them!

Decision making

Jamie challenged the audience to list urgent jobs and important jobs, creating a four point grid: Priorities, in order are:

1. The most important and urgent tasks
2. The urgent but not important
3. The important but not urgent
4. The neither urgent nor important (but sometimes most enjoyable!).

Farmers enjoy checking stock, moving stock, driving tractors: the day-to-day things.



Prioritising

Jamie highlighted the importance and priority of those office jobs - the financials, the business strategy, the animal health plans etc. – that are easily put off.

But these are tasks that are about working **on** the business rather than working **in** the business. It's important to try and put a value on those jobs and attempt to prioritise those.

These are the tasks, when time is spent on them and they are done well that that lead to a thriving business and may actually negate some of the 'working *in* the jobs' as the business becomes more efficient, long term.

Farmers will say that they do quite a lot of the strategic, working *on* the business type stuff as they were going about their day-to-day chores.

Jamie challenges this approach. He believes it's important that we don't just think about these things, we also write them down.

It's important to make time to make a strategic plan for a farm business and run the financials too.



Jamie at Scholland

Structure and Support

'Family farms often rely on chats at breakfast time or coffee time to make business decisions.' says Jamie.

Jamie believes that there's a lot more structure required than that. His business has moved away from this approach to rely more on peers, colleagues and friends to help with strategic planning. Jamie recommends participation in business structures, such as a Board or other groups to bring ideas and planning into the business, and courses including the Planning for Profit programme.

Meikle Maldron

Jamie says, 'Duncan and Claire are really good beef farmers with a low-input system, with a simplicity in terms of purchasing and labour inputs. They've thought about and set up systems - the way they calve their cows, the way they winter them – which has led to cattle rearing without complication.

They've got a clear focus on where they want to go with the business in the next few years and build up their suckler herd.'



Debating the Right Decisions!



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