



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

Making the most of your grass

Roxburgh

2nd July 2025



Making the most of your grass

Missed the Meeting? Here's What You Need to Know

We had a brilliant turnout at the recent Monitor Farm Scotland open meeting at Cowbog, where the focus was on **making the most of your grass in livestock systems**. For those who couldn't make it along, here's a quick roundup of the key takeaways from our speakers, **Michael Shannon** and **John Ritchie**.



Top Learnings:

1. **Finishing cattle and lambs on 100% forage is possible**, with a well-structured system.
2. **Water access and fencing** are critical to making rotational grazing work.
3. **Patience is key** when transitioning away from concentrates.
4. **Infrastructure is an investment**, it pays off in time, labour savings, and results.
5. **Positive mindset matters**, avoid 'busy fool' syndrome and give yourself room to learn.

👁️ Didn't make it?

We'll be sharing more from the Roxburghshire Monitor Farm throughout the year. Keep an eye out for events, photos and video snippets on our social media.

@monitorfarmscotland

If you've got questions or want to try similar systems on your own farm, get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

You can also find out more by visiting our website www.monitorfarms.co.uk

John Ritchie – Grazing Specialist & Farmer at Montalt Farm, Perthshire

John shared his journey to a **more structured, rotational grazing system** that now covers 90 paddocks and supports a mix of cattle and sheep across lowland and hill ground.

- Runs **110 cows and 500 ewes** on a mix of owned and seasonal land.
- Has built a **flexible infrastructure** of fencing, water, and tracks over several years, enabling efficient grazing management year-round.
- Emphasised the role of **liming**, water access, and subdividing fields to improve **permanent pasture** without over-reliance on reseedling.

Johns Top Tips:

- Don't walk away from a negative person, run!!
- Build your networks, knowledge transfer is a powerful thing.
- Get off the farm
- Try not to be too hard on yourself when it goes wrong, because it does!
- Watch out for the "busy fool"
- Get perspective

👉 **Top takeaway:** Invest in infrastructure, understand your grass growth patterns, and **don't let water (or negativity) be your limiting factor.**



Michael Shannon – Forage-Fed Beef at Thankerton Camp Farm

Michael runs a **fully forage-based finishing system** for cattle and lambs at Thankerton Camp Farm near Biggar – and the answer to his headline question, '*Is forage enough to finish?*' was a confident **yes**. But, as he stressed, “**you need patience**”.

- **No concentrates, no nitrogen**- just rotational grazing, red clover silage, and clever use of brassica crops like Swedes.
- Michael finishes around **150 Aberdeen Angus cattle** each year, targeting around **0.6–0.87 kg/day DLWG** – all from forage.
- Cattle are **outwintered** and moved in a system that follows grass growth closely. **No tractors in fields** during winter helps protect soil.
- Finished stock is sold **direct to customers** via www.damndelicious.co.uk, with any surplus sold deadweight.



👉 Top takeaway:

A well-planned grazing rotation and winter forage strategy can completely remove the need for hard feed – **lowering costs without sacrificing performance**.

Michael's top tip:

Instead of carrying a sward stick, just draw the lines on the side of your welly boot so they are on always to hand.





**MONITOR
FARM**
Scotland

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

Regional Adviser – Maura Wilson

07721 677556

mwilson@qmscotland.co.uk

monitorfarms.co.uk

Initiative supported by:



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN.