



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

Argyllshire

Summer Meeting Report

26 July 2023



MEETING REPORT

Getting the Most from your Grass and Livestock - Sustainably

Around **45** members of the farming community attended the meeting.

We looked at three key areas:

- Funding/grants
- Grass Plots
- The Ideal Suckler Cow

Funding/Grants - Jenny Love

Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) Grant Funding options are non-competitive and cover:

Carbon Audits – Standard cost of £500 if

- First carbon audit
- Previous audit is over 3 years old
- A significant change has been made to the business

Soil Sampling – Using traditional W method or GPS

- PH, P, K and Carbon are the minimum requirements
- Fertiliser recommendations must go with analysis
- Must have a carbon audit from last 3 years

Total claim allowance can be calculated by multiplying £30/ha by 20% of your region 1 ground to a maximum of £600. One-off payment of £250 for education and research of soil nutrient on **first** claim.

FARM FACTS

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

Livestock Health – a standard cost of £250 will be paid for each intervention (up to £500 per business). A one-off payment £250 for education and research of animal health and welfare on first claim.

Conditions

- Proof of investigation
- Supporting document of advised action (signed by vet/consultant)
- No carbon audit required but recommended

Full list of interventions [HERE](#)

Farmers and crofters can get funded one-to-one advice such as and [Integrated Land Management Plan](#) and [two specialist advice plans](#).

"Don't miss out on the funding and support for your croft or farm. There is something for everyone." **Jenny Love SAC**



Getting the Right Grass for your Farm Pat Lambert - Key Messages

Soil Fertility and Lime is Key

You will get the biggest return by getting your pH up to a right level. Get your fertility right, the grasses will perform for you. Target pH for mineral soils, in Scotland pH 6.5 starting point for re-seeds. Lime is critical but do not use more than 2 tonne/acre per annum - do it over a few years.

[pH & Nutrient Guide](#)

Utilisation and Management of your Grass

Whether you're grazing or cutting silage, keep on top of it and know what growth stage you are at. Have a target date where you're going to cut it or utilise it by. If you can graze/cut the grass at the correct stage, you're dealing with much higher metabolizable energy (ME) and that means higher digestibility and utilisation - your stock will perform better. It's about management, being there at the right time, keeping the grass leafy.

[QMS Grazing Calculator](#)

Don't be afraid of diversity within your mixtures

Look at these other species. The Cocksfoot grass at Craighens Farm is doing a job for managing the goose impact as it's tough and very deep rooting. Docks can be a problem, but they have only adapted to the fertility that's there, they're deep rooting, they're going down and picking nutrients. So, think about that and your other grass species, your fescues, Cocksfoot and Timothy. Consider deeper rooting herbs that will fit into your grazing system and bring more minerals to the party. Get these things right, you can cut a lot of your inputs back.

[GRASS SPECIES GUIDE](#)

Cocksfoot



Meadow Fescue



Italian Rye Grass



"The key to successful farming is to have a lot more lorries going down the farm road than there is coming up!"

Pat Lambert Watson Seeds

The Ideal Suckler Cow

Robert Gilchrist - Key Messages

Production

A productive cow drops her first calf on her 2nd birthday and calves every birthday after that, all the way up to be 10-12 years old after that you do see production dropping.

You're looking for her to be getting no intervention at calving time and rear that calf through to 50% of her body weight at weaning.

Cow Type

The ideal cow is feminine, fleshy with a moderate frame, and structurally sound. You're looking for something that is docile and is going to eat forage. The whole thing that over arches with that animal is that it fits the farm - make the animal fit the farm rather the farm fit the animal.



"The core piece that runs over it all is profit and having a cow that is profitable".

Robert Gilchrist – CEO Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society

Keep and Use Cow Data

As a matter of course you will already gather a lot of data on your cows.

This information is gold dust! A good starting point is [My Herd Stats](#) which pulls your cow data from your ScotEID records and is free and easy to use.

Key Performance Indicators for Maternal Traits include:

- Cows and heifers calved in the first six weeks of the calving period.
- Calves born alive, as a % of females put to the bull.
- Calves weaned, as a % of cows put to the bull.
- Age at first calving.
- Herd replacement rate.



"Everybody has really enjoyed the day and I think because it's obviously on an island, it's good to see a lot of people coming in and getting a lot out of it so I'll definitely come along to the next one too". **Morven Brown - attendee**

Thank you to all our guest speakers, Steering Group members, RSABI and attendees.

To find out more or to sign up - contact Regional Adviser

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