



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

ARGYLLSHIRE

Winter Open Meeting Report
26 October 2023



MEETING REPORT

Fluke, Fanks, Nofence and Forage Budgets

The meeting was held at the RSPB [Kinnabus Farm](#) at the Oa on Islay and 36 people attended. Stuart Lamont the Farm Manager and Monitor Farm Management Group member introduced us to the farm.

Prone to wet winters and a high fluke burden, Stuart has been adopting a test-and-treat approach to liver fluke control at Kinnabus to manage resistance and benefit dung beetles and choughs. He's also adapting the outdoor wintering system for cattle and sheep and adopting No Fence collars on cattle to improve grazing management.

Nofence Cattle Collars

We walked out to look at the cattle grazing on the coastal cliff pastures on the Oa. He has worked with the collars for a few years starting with 10 of them and that number has increased recently to around 30. The collars have a small solar panel on the sides which extends the battery life, and they use rechargeable batteries.

Islay and Colonsay are chough strongholds, with almost the entire Scottish population found here.



The collars are linked to an App which Stuart accesses via his iPad and allows him to draw virtual fences. This helps with the management of grazing conservation areas for the protection of Chough and other birds and allows overwintering, not to mention excluding dangerous cliff areas and wetter areas likely to have a higher fluke burden. Stuart could show us the cattle movements of each individual cow on the GPS map.

He explained that Nofence trains the animals to turn around on audio. When the animal approaches the boundary, the collar starts playing an audio warning. The audio warning is a scale of tones, which starts at a low pitch and rises gradually as the animal moves through the boundary zone. If the whole scale has been played, a mild, but effective electric pulse will be given. The animal then learns to recognise the audio warning and turns around to avoid the electric pulse. The cattle all adapted to the system very quickly with no adverse reactions.



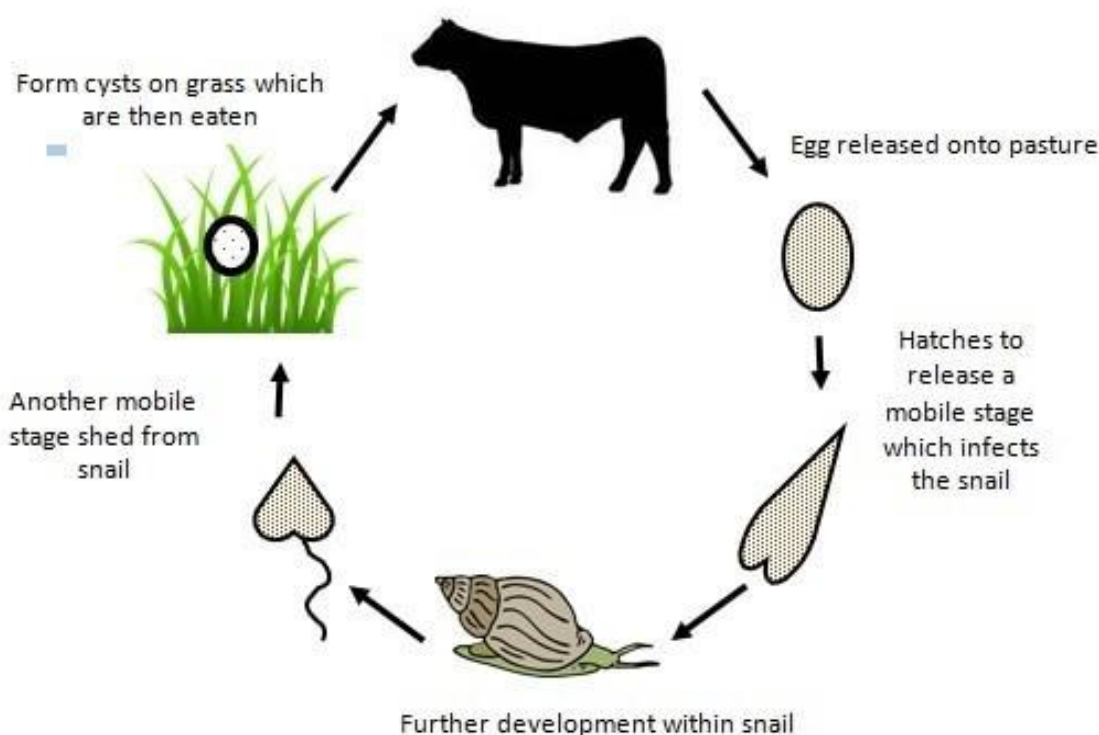
It was a great chance to see [Nofence](#) cow collars in practice!

Fighting Fluke

Fluke is a significant challenge in Islay due to the wet and mild climate. Dr Philip Skuce from the Moredun Research Institute and expert in fluke parasitology has been working with Stuart to manage fluke risk and conservation grazing.

Testing and targeting the treatment of fluke is beneficial to not only livestock health but the health of the environment as it can reduce the impact of flukicides on beneficials to the soil and insects such as dung beetles. It is also kinder to the farmers pocket and reduces the risk of resistance which is also a growing problem on the West coast.

The take home message by everyone was **TEST – DON'T GUESS!**



Further Reading and Funding for Testing

Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) grants can provide funding to help you test for fluke in 2023/24 and you can find out more [HERE](#) or speak to your vet for more information.

The fluke challenge is individual to each farm. Further information is available at these links:

[QMS Liver Fluke Manual](#)

[Control of Fluke in Sheep](#)

[Control of Fluke in Cattle](#)

Sustainable control and treatment of parasites is a key focus area of the Argyllshire Monitor Farm.



Dr Philip Skuce describes the fluke life cycle

Fanks, Food and Forage

Stuart and the team at Kinnabus use a mobile Pratley sheep handling system.

The fank can be moved to different areas of the farm and packs in easily to a trailer and can be set up in about 10 minutes. The system makes operations much easier on both the sheep and staff.

Monitor farmer Craig Archibald was particularly impressed with the sheep holding crate and how it caught the stock which would be well suited to his horned Blackface ewes and lambs.

It was discussed that more regular testing of sheep for parasites and performance recording led to working with them more and this is an issue to less available labour and time input. A mobile fank could be a wise investment going forward.

After a very enjoyable lunch at Ardbeg Distillery the group discussed the value of forage budgeting with Regional Adviser Christine Cuthbertson.

A worked example was presented highlighting the importance of the Dry Matter content of silages and the value of having pit and bale silages analysed.

Why Forage Budget?

1. Peace of mind that feed supplies match expected demand.
2. Detection of supply shortfalls; informing early intervention.
3. Reduce risk of sudden diet changes or expensive feed purchases in late season.
4. Make best use of what you have.

Calculate your own forage budget [HERE](#)



Attendees looking at mobile fank and discussing forage budgets



MONITOR FARM Scotland

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

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