



# FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

**SOUTH AYRSHIRE**

Summer Meeting Report  
28 June 2023



# MEETING REPORT

## GETTING THE MOST FROM GRASS AND FORAGES

Around **90** members of the farming community attended the meeting.

We looked at three key areas:

- Sheep Handling Systems
- Red Clover
- Grazing Management

### Sheep Handling – Cammy Wilson

#### Key Messages

- **Do your research** – there are a lot of handling systems out there so get the right fit for you and your farm. There is no right or wrong answer – breed, environment and shepherding characteristics will all influence handling technique.
- **Side tilt** is a feature on many sheep handlers that make jobs like crutching and foot inspection much easier.
- **Automated systems and digital technology** can take the working pressure off your body, so you don't accumulate problems in later life. Automated weighing sales connected to dosing gun or needle results in targeted treatment of vaccines and wormers and reduce resistance problems with precision treatment.

*“Great advice from Cammy, don't wait until your knees or hips are knackered before you start thinking I will make life easier for myself. Do it for yourself now, and you are less likely to face those problems” David Andrew*

#### FARM FACTS

Partners: John, Alison, and David

One full time employee – Sean

- **130** ha owned and **553** rented
- **150** crossbred cows
- **1040** crossbred hill ewes & pedigree Charolais flock
- **210** purchased stores finished
- All progeny finished
- **33** ha cereals
- **5.4ha** forage crops
- **4ha** Red Clover



*The Red Clover crop was a real hit with attendees*

## Red Clover (RC) – Paddy Jack DFL

### Key Messages

#### BENEFITS

- Can produce between 12 and 16 tons DM/ha when grown with Perennial Ryegrass.
- Annual N fixation of 150-200kg N/ha is possible from swards with high RC content.
- High crude protein content of 16-20 %.
- Highly palatable leading to increased animal intake and performance.
- Deep tap root makes RC relatively drought tolerant.

*“I liked learning about the Red Clover. I was speaking to dad there and I think we are going to be trying a field of it soon.”*

**Findlay Barclay**

#### ESTABLISHMENT & MANAGING RED CLOVER

- RC needs a high soil fertility – index 3 for P and K and soil pH 6.0-6.5 is desirable and below 800ft.
- Sow from April to July when soil temperatures are above 10°C.
- Best sown in a mixture with Perennial Ryegrass and white clover.
- Ensure a fine, firm seedbed and roll before and after sowing <1cm deep.
- RC in establishment year should be allowed to flower before first cut to ensure strong root establishment.
- First cut in mid-late May with second, third and fourth cuts at 6-8 week intervals, no later than October. No cut lower than 7cm.
- Crop can be autumn grazed in suitable conditions to leave an over-winter cover of 6cm.



## Paddock and Rotational Grazing – Rhidian Jones

### Key Messages

#### Rotational Grazing - Weaned Lambs

- Relatively easy system – let the lambs have unlimited high quality grass.
- Shift the lambs every 2 days.
- Enter paddock at 2,750 to 3,000kg Dry Matter (DM)/ha.
- Leave at 1,800kg DM/ha and tidy up with follower group or leave to regrow as the risk of heading is past.
- Lambs will be drawn constantly so demand will drop as numbers reduce.
- Leader/follower system in an option depending on whether there is a suitable group to follow the lambs – such as fit dry sheep or cattle.
- The number of followers needs to be carefully calculated to match the available DM that the lambs leave behind.

#### Leader follower system

- Weaned lambs graze from 10 cm to 6cm
- Mature fit ewes (or cattle) follow to graze to 4 cm
- Allows lambs to get the “cream” and ewes can tidy up residuals and reset pastures for tupping



*“From the rotational grazing side of things, you need to have the infrastructure right. Probably choose the right class of stock to start with and then just keep monitoring the grass grow and work out the calculations.*

*The Andrew's have done the best they can as it's not been an easy season with low grass growth since early May. Hopefully it will take off now there has been some rain”*

**Rhidian Jones**



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

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