



# FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

## South Ayrshire

Winter Open Meeting Report  
22 February 2024



# MEETING REPORT

## FOCUSING ON FEET, FEEDING, FATTENING AND FARMING-STRONG

Around **55** members of the farming community attended the meeting.

We looked at three key areas:

- **Managing sheep lameness**
- **Feeding fodder crops in Winter**
- **Electronic weighing and recording**

John reported that since the first open meeting they have fixed their weigh-cells and they now weigh fattening cattle 2 days after they are in the shed to give them time to settle and weigh again as they are sold. **Bullocks** have been averaging at **1.64kg** per day and the **heifers** are at **1.31kg** per day live weight gain which they are pleased with.

Hill cows were in sheds (backend calvers and in calf) from the turn of the year, small plain cows suited to the Blair farm of Luing, Simmental and Salers crosses.

David said **120 ewes** were just coming to the lambing and the **300 cross** ewes due to lamb in April were just finishing grazing of a field of **fodder beet**. They want to push using the technology they already have on farm to link weighing equipment and readers to a new software package. This would allow them to **weigh and monitor lamb performance** and health and pick out those animal not performing to assess further or treat.

## FARM FACTS

Partners: John, Alison, and David

One full time employee – Sean

- **716** hectares owned and rented
- **150** suckler cows
- **1000** breeding ewes
- **40** hectares of crops
- All progeny finished
- **200** purchased stores finished

The Monitor Farm had arranged a one-to-one meeting with consultant Matt Blyth to talk through the options for the farm which had been very helpful and **AgriWebb** looked like the best solution for their farm.

Farm soils had been analysed and need about **800 tonne of lime** across the farm to bring the levels up to around **6.2 pH** so they are going to **apply 270 tonnes** lime over the **next 3 years**. They will cut costs elsewhere to do this but should be a good **investment**. Last two years only used purchased fertiliser on the silage and arable ground and own slurry on grazing fields. Specialist plans on **farm nutrients** and the **hill cow system** were almost complete.





# MEETING TOPICS

## Feeding fodder crops in Winter

Management Group member Gavin Stewart – Agronomist (Agrii) discussed the swede crop on the farm being used to finish hogs.

The crop had been **planted** in **April 23** and had been challenged initially with the dry weather and struggled to germinate with a **variance** across the field. With rain from July, by September there was a good canopy head. John and David will go again with the root crop this year by **spraying off** and **direct drilling**.

The yields and costs were effective. Drilling the crop including spraying is around **£175/acre** on the 6 acre crop with a yield of **£60 tonne** of dry matter which is around **half the cost of barley** and has good utilisation to feed over winter. **Direct drilling** the crop also prevents the compaction and weed growth you would get with **conventional ploughing**.

Initially the hogs were **strip grazing** the field which is the best option to **utilise** the crop, however the solar panels on the **electric fence** boxes were not effective enough to keep the hogs back and had been removed – a learning point for the 2024 crop.

You will find **more information** about **growing** brassica and fodder crops [HERE](#)



The swedes struggled to germinate in a dry May and June 2024.



The crop started to come on with some rain in July.



A good sound canopy by September.



Thanks to Gavin's advice the hogs have had a good winter munch on the swedes!



# MEETING TOPICS

## Managing Sheep Lameness

Management Group member Marion McMillan BVMS CertAVP(Sheep) MRCVS Veterinary Investigation Officer with SRUC gave a very engaging presentation on how to spot and treat the variety of sheep lameness causes and the production impact it causes.

### Impact of Lamé Ewes at Lambing

- Metabolic disease
- Painful
- Thinner ewes
- Less colostrum
- Poorer quality colostrum
- Prolapse
- Less milk
- Lamé lambs
- Liver abscesses in lambs (Fusobacterium Necrophorum)
- Reduced growth rates in lambs

### Lameness Causes

**Footrot and Scald** – caused by *Dichelobacter Nodosus*



### Scald

#### Treatment

- Scald - Antibiotic spray or footbath
- Footrot – Antibiotic injection – Long lasting Oxytetracycline OR long-acting Penicillin plus antibiotic spray

### Severe Footrot

### Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis – CODD

Associated with *Treponema* bacteria



In CODD there is a primary lesion at the coronary band with under-running of the hoof wall from the coronary band towards the toe.

### Toe Granuloma – Caused by foot damage



### Strawberry Footrot

- This is orf mixed with *Dermatophilus*
- Reminder – wear gloves
- Orf can infect humans
- Long, slow resolution
- Watch out for flies
- Can spread up legs



*Your vet can advise on suitable prevention and treatments for lameness.*

## Managing Sheep Lameness Cont.

### Treat: Foot Trimming?

Trimming is **not** recommended for routine maintenance or treatment of sheep lameness.

Foot trimming is associated with:

- **Higher** levels of lameness.
- **Increased** recovery time

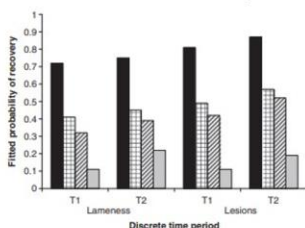
It can also cause:

- **Bacteria** being transferred from diseased feet to healthy feet.
- **Trauma** to tissue.

### Treat: Foot Trimming?



- Foot trimming is associated with
  - Higher levels of lameness
  - Increased recovery time



All sheep were treated with antibiotic spray  
 Black: Injectable oxytet, no trim  
 Squares: No antibiotics, no trim  
 Diagonal: Injectable oxytet and trim  
 Grey: Trim only, no antibiotic

Kaler J., Daniels, S.L., Wright, J.L. & Green, L.E. (2010)  
 Randomized clinical trial of long acting oxytetracycline, foot  
 trimming, and flunixin meglumine on time to recovery in sheep  
 with footrot. Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine 24, pp 420 -  
 425

- Bacteria transferred from diseased feet to healthy feet
- Trauma to tissues



### Vaccination

Lameness vaccines have their part to play in flock management to reduce the incidence of lameness on farm. Footvax is the available vaccine for **Footrot**. Speak with your **vet** for further guidance.

### Further information

- [Diagnosis & Treatment of Lameness in Sheep](#)
- [Lameness in sheep](#)

Thank you to our presenters, guests, and attendees on the day and to the Andrew Family for being such super hosts.

### Electronic weighing and recording

Alison Fergus of Datamars and Gavin Barrie of Mccaskies demonstrated using the **Tru-test** weigh systems using the weigh-head on the Andrew's farm which can be **moved** between the sheep and cattle weigh scales.

This is a wide subject area and Datamars will be at a **future** meeting for a more in-depth **product training** session for those interested.

### Farmstrong Scotland

Alix Ritchie and Clare Dickson of **Farmstrong** Scotland joined the group after a lunch in the Carrick Centre.

Farmstrong Scotland is an **initiative** to help farmers, crofters and their families to cope with the ups and downs of farming and crofting by sharing things they can do to **look after** themselves and the people in their business.

It is a **peer-to-peer led** programme, driven by scientific information and real-life stories, so together we can share, learn and support our **wellbeing**.

The audience took part in a Wellbeing Bank Account exercise which highlighted the benefit of investing regularly in our wellbeing.

Find out more [HERE](#)





# MONITOR FARM Scotland

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

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Riaghaltas na h-Alba



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