



# FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

## SOUTH AYRSHIRE

Fodder Beet Visit Report

7 February 2024





# MEETING REPORT

## WINTER FEEDING DRY COWS ON FODDER BEET

Members of the South Ayrshire Management Group visited Craigenton Farm, Turnberry on 7 February. Monitor Farmers John and David Andrew grow fodder beet to winter their ewes and were keen to see cows on the system.

Tom has a **340** head dairy herd on a low input/low output system. For 4 years he has been outwintering with cows going to the beet on 31 December after drying off for 6-7 weeks until mid February, when it is all eaten up.

A suitable field is rented from the local estate and the cows are **transitioned** in sheds on harvested beet for **two weeks** prior to turnout.

Tom started the system after going to a meeting with New Zealand fodder beet expert Dr Jim Gibbs. The first year or two the agronomy of growing the crop needed refining, but now he gets a good leafy crop and bulb. The cows are moved forward each day and get **two bales of silage** in addition to the beet.

Tom grows **12 acres** and lifts 50 tonnes to transition the cows over 16-17 days. **130 dry cows** are running on the beet, and it will last them 6 weeks along with **90 bales of silage**.

You need to put a lot into growing the crop but if you get it right, it really reduces winter feeding costs.

The variety being used is **Geronimo** but Tom is going to trial **Brigadier in 2024**. The cows eat beet in a different way from sheep. They knock the bulb over and eat it first and then come back to eat the leaves, which is a consideration when choosing the variety.

The right cow is important, and Tom has a smaller and hairier cross bred Friesian suitable for outwintering.



Tom Shearlaw with Monitor Farmer David Andrew

## THE FIGURES

### Inputs Per Acre

Rent £90

Ploughing £25

Cultivator £10

Roll £5

Drill £26 (Sown on 26 April 2023)

Seed £110 (Geronimo)

Spray 1 £29 (Pre-emergence)

Spray 2 £26 (2<sup>nd</sup> weeds plus foliar feed)

Fert 1 £77 (Sown with seed 21-8-11) 3cwt

Fert 2 £147 (5-6-20+S+B+Na) 5cwt

Fert 3 £45 (24-0-13 +7.5 S) 2 cwt

Fert 4 £64 (Urea) 1.5 cwt

Fert 5 £24 (Urea) 1cwt

**TOTAL COST £678/acre or £1675/ha.**



**Cost per dry cow per day £2 housed.**

**Cost per dry cow per day £1 fodder beet.**

### Benefits for Tom

- Halves cost of winter feeding of dry cows.
- Labour saving of feeding housed cattle and machinery costs.
- Heifers transition well and early onto grass in the spring as used to being outside.

### Further Information

[Outwintering livestock on brassica and forage crops](#)

[Fodder beet in sustainable livestock systems Webinar](#)



# MONITOR FARM Scotland

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