



# FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

WHERE HAVE THE SEASONS GONE?

**SOUTH AYRSHIRE**

Winter Open Meeting Report

11 February 2026



# MEETING REPORT

On Wednesday 11 February 2026, 31 members of the South Ayrshire farming community came along to The Coo Shed, Ayr for the Monitor Farm Winter Open meeting.



The meeting examined the practical **challenges** and **opportunities** facing livestock farmers as seasonal patterns become less **predictable**.

**Marion McMillan** BVMS MRCVS, SAC Veterinary Services and practising vet, discussed **planning** for cattle and sheep parasite and health challenges in changing **weather patterns**.

Topics covered included **parasite lifecycles** in relation to grass growth on permanent and **rotational grazing**, the impact of warmer and wetter weather on parasite and disease risk, including the **emergence** of previously uncommon species such as **barber's pole worm**, and the role of **dynamic**, test-and-treat health **planning** for flocks and herds.



**Lorna Shaw**, Ruminant Nutritionist with SAC Consulting, discussed **balancing** cattle and sheep **nutrition** in changing weather patterns. Lorna covered what to consider when **grazing** in **dry** conditions such as spring 2025, how rotational grazing decisions can affect performance, silage-making considerations in **very wet** or very dry summers, and the value of silage analysis, including when to sample and how to interpret results. Lorna also **highlighted** the importance of seeking **professional advice** to correctly balance rations.

The evening finished with a **Q&A** panel session with Marion, Lorna, John, and David Andrew. Were joined by Gavin Hill, SAC Beef Specialist who outlined the **beef finishing project** which was under way with John and David.



# WHERE HAVE THE SEASONS GONE?

## Presentations and further information



### Marions Key Messages

#### Liver Fluke

- TEST – DON'T GUESS
- Fluke risk season **extending** later into winter-dry May-July reduces risk and pushes risk later.
- Treating **too early** means **wasted** money and no persistent action – so then get **damage** later in the **season**.

#### Rumen Fluke

- Clinical disease is **rare**, but infection is very common.
- Clinical disease is often associated with the following **signs**:
  - Rapid loss of **condition**
  - Profuse watery **scour**
  - Dehydration + dullness
  - High **mortality**/morbidity can occur

#### Climate Change and Worms

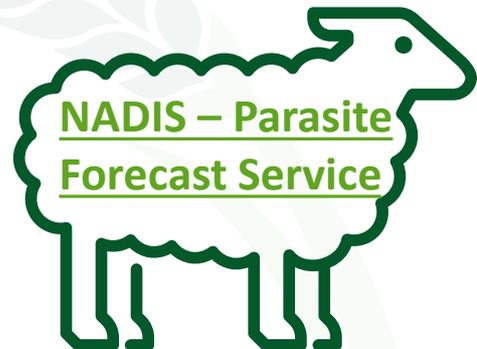
- **Increased** temperatures = accelerated development.

#### BUT

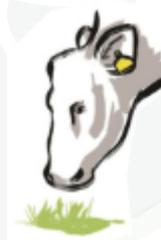
- **Droughts** impact on larval survival and re-emergence.
- **Milder winters** can reduce the survival of some worms.
- A warm and **wet autumn** can mean **high** autumn worm burden.
- **Changes** to timing of **Nematodirus** hatch.

### Further resources:

Marion's Presentation



MoreDun



COWS

Control Of Worms Sustainably

# WHERE HAVE THE SEASONS GONE?

## Presentations and further information

### Lorna's Key Messages

#### Too much or too little?

##### Excess grass in the rotation:

- Take paddocks **out for silage**. This high-quality leafy silage is perfect for ewes in late pregnancy.
- Bring **more stock** on rotation. Ideally with lower feed demand to follow main group e.g. cows or ewes with singles.
- Mowing **or** topping.
- **Deferred grazing** – shut up paddocks until late summer/autumn and graze with dry ewes or cows.

##### Too little grass in the rotation:

- Bring **additional paddocks** into the rotation to extend rest period.
- **Apply fertiliser** if conditions are suitable and other aspects are not limiting growth, e.g. low rainfall.
- Feed concentrates or silage.
- **Wean** lambs from 10 weeks of age or calves from 5 months (155 days) to reduce feed requirements to mature stock.
- **Reduce** demand by selling cull ewe's, cows or lambs / calves as store.

#### The importance of silage analysis

- Essential for **accurate** rationing – Dry Matter, Energy (D Value), Protein.
- Allows us to **budget** for the winter ahead.
- Gives us an indication of how successful **fermentation** has been.

#### When & how to sample silage for accuracy

**When:** Anytime 6 weeks post cutting.

##### How:

- The sample should be **representative** of what livestock are to be fed.
- Bales core **2-3 bales** into a bucket and **mix** the cores
- **Pit** – core front, middle and back or in sample a **“W”** across pit **face** – aim for just after feed out.
- **500g** to be sent to lab in a well sealed **airtight** bag.
- **Clearly** labelled with name, Farm, Date Sampled, Sample Ref, Cut No.
- **Send** to lab immediately post sampling.
- **Avoid** sampling on a Friday.

#### Further Resources:

Lorna Shaw's Presentation





# MONITOR FARM Scotland

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

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