



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

South Ayrshire

Sheep Special Meeting Handout

and Report

11 September 2024



**Shallochpark Farm Girvan – By kind permission of Hew
Dalrymple-Hamilton
Hosts – Francis & Marion McMillan**

Host Farm Facts

Farm Facts

Bargeny Farm sheep enterprise owned and farmed by the Dalrymple-Hamilton Family.

Three units extending to **2200** acres (890ha)

- Lowground Unit–Shallochpark-**600** texel cross ewes.
- Mixed unit of low ground and hill- Houdston-**700** Lleyn ewes.
- Hill unit-Delamford-**700** Cheviots.

The units run with **1.5** labour units which is Francis and a self-employed person at lambing time for the hill ewes.

Breeding

Produce all their own **replacement** females – retaining **580** ewe lambs each year

Have a small tup breeding flock producing their own terminal sires of Texel and crosses (Charolais/Beltex)

- Lleyn and Cheviot tups bought in for Houdston and hill units.
- Usually purchase a stock tup but try to use own tups as much as possible.

*Hill
Cheviots at
scanning*

2024 lamb crop of **3000** lambs. **2021** was **3300** so a bit back from where they want to be.

Lower scan this year so busy looking at how they can improve the scanning to try and get the lamb crop back up to the **target** of **3200**.

Lambs/Lambing

Lambing **inside** at Shallochpark in **March**, Houdston and Delamford all **outside** at the same time in **April**.

Other than retained ewe lambs, everything is sold fat (deadweight).

Lambs finished on grass and fodder crops.

- In 2024 they have **23** acres (9.3ha) of swedes and **16** acres (6.4ha) of kale.
- **Re-seed** with young grass and clover after brassicas.
- Fortunate that the Dalrymple-Hamilton family also farm a beef and **arable unit** ,and the **Cheviot** lambs go there to **fatten**.



Host Farm Facts

Marketing

- Sell **90%** of lambs dead weight aiming for **20.5kilo** carcass across all breeds they are using.
- Start to sell lambs in the middle of **June** and sell on a **weekly** basis aiming to have sold **2000** lambs by **Christmas**.
- Move to a fortnightly basis from **January** until **March** to finish another **300/400** lambs.
- **Smaller** lambs, are kept through to the end of April/beginning of May-can sell lamb for **12 months** of the year.
- The **focus** is on the **cost of production** and getting the most margin.
- Majority of Lambs are sold through **Ayrshire Country Lamb Ltd.** into Farm Stock (Scotland)Ltd.
- About **10% lambs** and **cull** ewes go to Craig Wilson Ltd. (Ayr Market).

Health - Vaccines

- Shallochpark and Houdston unit ewes get three different **abortion** vaccinations.
- All ewes get a **Footvax** jab to try and reduce lameness.
- biggest lameness issue is **CODD**.
- The hill Cheviots are vaccinated for Johne's disease.



Shallochpark ewes

Worming

Being sheep only farms, there are **no cattle** to co-graze, so all **lambs** receive a brake **drench** of a **type 4 or 5** wormer once a year to try and stop resistance.

- **Delamford** hill has **white** wormer resistance.
- **Ivermectin** resistance at **Houdston**.
- **No diagnosed** resistance at **Shallochpark**.
 - Only move **breeding** stock if they have to.
 - **Quarantine**, drench, and keep off pasture for 24 hours before they are moved.
 - Will move lambs down most years but they get **drenched first**.
 - Have own **faecal sampling** kit and do all the testing in house. **Test and treat as required** and post drench check test if they think something hasn't worked.

Minerals

All lambs and ewes get a bolus for minerals

- Deficient in selenium on all farms.
- Delamford hill farm is cobalt deficient.



The finished article!

Sheep System – Francis McMillan



Replacement Selection

- Must suckle unassisted
- Texels – twin born
- Good growth rates
- Correct conformation
- No turned in eyelids



Francis talks through the 3 flocks and how they make up the sheep system.

Why do we cull ewes?

- Small pelvis
- Age – 6 years
- Prolapse
- Empty at scan
- Not rearing
- Bad bags
- Tooth loss
- Bad feet
- Thin
- Bad mothers



A variety of fodder crops are grown at Shallochpark.

Flock Performance	2021	2024
SP Ewes	211%	182%
Terminals	196%	180%
SP Gimmers	195%	153%
Houdston	190%	178%
Delamford	191%	174%
Total	2013 ewes – 195%	2017 Ewes – 175%
Yell	1.53%	2.97%
Lambs marked	3357	2986
% of scan alive	85.5%	84.6%

Flock Health – Marion McMillan

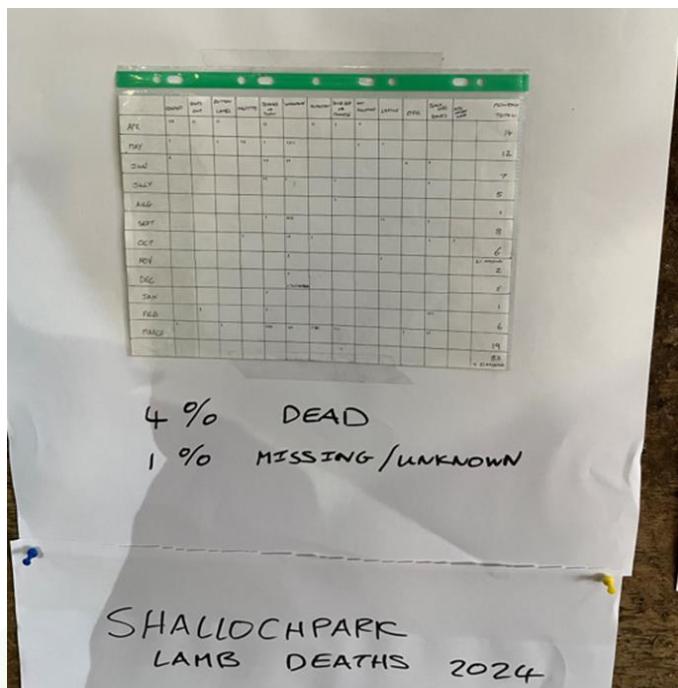
MRVCS



Flock Health

The farm try to use 'prevention is better than the cure' approach on the flocks with uses of appropriate vaccines and faecal sampling for fluke and worms.

A log of lamb deaths and causes is recorded at lambing time as are ewe deaths to identify issues quickly.



Reasons for sheep deaths – photo of tally sheet used on farm.

Prevention – Vaccines

Abortion

- Toxovax
- Enzovax/cevac
- Campyvax

Clostridial

- Bravoxin/Covexin 10
- Heptevac P+

Johne's

- Guidair

Footrot

- Footvax

Disease Risks to be Aware of

- Maedi Visna
- CLA
- Border disease
- Johne's
- Enzootic Abortion in Ewes
- Scab
- Wormer resistance
- Flukicide resistance



Attendees were keen to hear from Vet Marion on sheep health and Tup MOT's.

Tup MOT's

Marion discussed the value of Tup MOT's and demonstrated how these should be carried out and what to look for.

Teeth

- Check the teeth and mouth for missing teeth and abscesses as well as abnormalities such as overshot/undershot jaw.

Testicles

- Testicles should be firm but springy, equal, heavy, smooth and move freely.
- Watch out for small testicles (one or both) or hard and enlarged testicle(s) which suggests inflammation. The epididymis, located at the bottom of each testicle, should be equal in size and smooth.
- Measure testicles.
- Check for scrotal hernias, appearing as a soft swelling above the testicles.



**A tup
gets his
MOT!**

- Check for woolly scrotums, these can affect the ability of the scrotum to keep the testes cool.
- Check for abnormalities to the prepuce, such as ulcers, swellings, orf, discharge or blood.
- Check the penis for growths, adhesions, deviation or loss of urethral process at the tip.

Tone

- Aim for Body Condition Score (BCS) 3.5 – 4.

Toes

- Lameness is a big cause of reduced fertility, look for any abnormality in the limbs. Check the feet for any scald, footrot or CODD.

Other

- Check for cracks and infection at the base of horns, any CLA (*Caseous Lymphadenitis*) abscesses around throat and neck, or sunburn/photosensitized skin.
- Check the brisket for any painful sores that can reduce desire to work.
- Check for wool loss and irritation which may be due to scab, lice, bacterial dermatitis.

More Information: [Tupping Toolkit](#) | [Helping farmers in Scotland](#) | [Farm Advisory Service \(fas.scot\)](#)

Rowanston Sheep System – Workshop



John & David Andrew summarised their sheep system (see appendix). The 35 attendees at the meeting then worked in groups to make suggestions that could be implemented for the flocks at Rowanston and The Blair.

WORKSHOP – Key Feedback

- Work out what parts are working – look at figures & financials.
- Cross-ewes – better nutrition post tupping.
- Try different bolus.
- Too many sheep?.
- Base nutrition (ME and protein).
- Trial a teaser ram on the hill.
- Buy in replacements.
- Worm check hoggs.
- Need a Body Condition Score strategy
 - Cross ewes at tupping should be 3.5.



Sheep system workshop in full swing.

NEXT STEPS

- Nutrition was identified as a key issue for the Andrew's flocks. SAC Ruminant Nutritionist, Lorna Shaw, would be visiting the farm at the end of September to review the farm nutrition and requirements for all stock classes.
- This would be followed with a Nutrition Workshop with Lorna for the Management Group on Wednesday 16 October.
- Once nutrition demand was calculated advice would be sought and tied into the November meeting (date TBC) to look at how the ground at Rowanston and the Blair could be utilised to provide the best nutrition.

Our thanks are extended to Hew Dalrymple-Hamilton and Francis and Marion McMillan, without whom the day would not have been possible.

We are also grateful to Dr Stewart Burgess (Moredun), Lynsay Bradford (Trading Standards) and Damelza Lowe (Lowe Maintenance) for coming along to talk about sheep scab prevention, control and sheep dipping training.



Meetings always provide the chance to get a good catch up with some nice food!

Appendix - Rowanston Sheep

Ewe Flock Performance

Scanning Percentage	Ewes Numbers 2024	2024	2023	2022
		2024	2023	2022
Early Flock	124	152%		
April Flock	256	156%	177%	179%
Hill Flock	464	129%	128%	150%
Cast Ewes (away wintered)	132	155%	142%	159%
Scanning Percentage		142%	146%	161%

Sheep Flock Review

- Challenging Year
- Poor scanning figures
- Lameness issues
- Lamb sales achieving good price
- Lots of potential-management, nutrition and health

Lambing Times

- **February**–Early flock of Charollais crosses lambed inside at Rowanston
- **April** – Cross ewes lambed outside with Cross hoggs at Rowantson
- **Late April** – Hill Cheviots lambed outside at Blair
- **Late April** – Hill cast ewes lambed outside at Blair

2024 Lamb Sales So Far...

- 123 @ £145.47 less deductions.
- Average carcass wt. 20.38kg

Example - April Flock Potential

- 256 Ewes
- Scanned 156%
- Lost potential compared to 2023 – 21% or 54 lambs
- 54 lambs @ £150/head = £8,100
- Scanning to lambing losses = 13% or 52 lambs
- 52 Lambs @ £150/head = £7,800
- 2025 potential = £15,900

Hill Lambs - minerals

- John & David are trialling what works with mineral supplementation in ewe lambs
- Group 1 to get - Liquithrive
- Group 2 to get mineral Coseicure bolus
- Group 3 to get Liquithrive and Coseicure bolus

Barren Ewes

- Will addressing lameness improve figures?
- What else needs to be done?

Health

- More detailed animal health plan/planning required. Include below actions:
- Toxoplasmosis testing via MSD barren ewe testing.
- Iceberg diseases?

Nutrition

- Lorna Shaw Ruminant Nutritionist Visiting Farm in 2 weeks.
- Look at forage budgets and match energy requirements with stock classes.
- Nutrition requirements of breeding stock at critical points such as tupping,
- Look at energy availability from grass to tie in with grassland management plan.

2025 Flock Targets

- Increase scanning percentage
- Foot rot issues – cull policy and vaccination with vet help
- Further flock disease screening
- Naive to abortion with no current vaccination programme
- Currently clean grazing system but check worm control policy
- Shorten lamb finishing period for low-ground lambs
- Continue with longer keep lamb finishing for hill lambs
- Lamb minerals and trace element plan
- Nutrition at tupping
- Grazing plan to make best use of grass and forage crops
- Collect and analyse more data
- Individual enterprise financial performance
- Better use of technology



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

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