



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

STIRLINGSHIRE

Winter Open Meeting Report
27 January 2026



MEETING REPORT

WHAT ARE YOU FEEDING FOR?

Around **34** members of the farming community attended the meeting.

As part of a **re-seeding programme**, a fodder crop was planted to provide a winter sheep feed for **280 in-lamb ewes** at Lands of Drumhead.

Rebecca Duncan has taken the responsibility for the feeding of the crop to the ewe flock at Lands of Drumhead and the **support from Graham Lofthouse** Farmer and adviser of Bankhouse Farm, had been invaluable.

What was Grown?

A straight Redstart was sown along with a mixture of **80% Redstart/20% Samson** turnip at 2.5kg per acre.

This was advised by Andrew Best (Watson Seeds) as Redstart is a **fast growing** variety that has the best winter **hardiness** of all the rapes and hybrids. It is a **reliable** option that is highly **palatable**.

Samson produces a large tankard shaped bulb. Andrew finds it to be the most palatable stubble turnip. Having a mixture allows you to combine different aspects of the two species.

"It can be daunting to grow something for the first time and to get the best return from the investment, you need to calculate feed value of the crop by measuring it." Graham Lofthouse



"I think had I not worked out how much they were needing, I probably would have been giving them at least double just based on the area that I thought they would want to eat in a day"

Rebecca Duncan



The Duncan's Learning Points

- Seek **guidance** from other farmers who are growing fodder crops.
- Your seed supplier/agronomist want you to get the **best possible** crop and are happy to **support** you.
- Dust off your maths skills and **calculate** the scope of the **feed value**.
- Know what **stock classes** you want to feed.
- Remember to **include** the feed value of any **additional** hay/feed provided.
- **Plan** the **direction** that you will allocate the crop to the stock and **factor** in **lie-back** areas and **access** gates.
- Find the **right crop** for your **system** (this may take a couple of years).

Feeding Forage Crops

How to Calculate Forage Crop Dry Matter per Hectare

Tools needed

- Square meter
- Shears or knife
- Bag
- Weigh scale

Process

1. Select an average or representative area.
2. Cut all plants in square meter and place in bag.
3. If root crop, weigh leaf and root separately.
4. Weigh bag contents.
5. Multiply weight by the dry matter of root or leaf (see chart below).
6. Multiply step 3 by 10,000 to get dry matter per hectare.
7. To calculate available feed and potential wastage deduct 10 to 20%.
8. Calculate leaf @12%dm for most root crops.

Forage Crop Key Points

- Know what class of stock you want to feed and their nutritional requirements.
- When do you want to utilise the feed?
- Is the crop you have chosen Winter hardy or not?
- 30% of the diet should come from other feed source.
- Have a run back area.
- Introduce stock gradually over 7 days (transition).
- What's plan "B" if weather or ground conditions are not favourable.

Provide Appropriate Minerals

Brassicas tend to be high in glucosinolates, which can negatively affect iodine and vitamin E uptake. They are also low in copper, iodine, phosphorous and magnesium so it's important to provide these minerals taking into account sheep breed.

	Sowing rate (kg/ha)	Days to grazing	Number of grazings possible	Summer/ winter use	Dry matter %	Digestibility (D-Value)	ME (MJ/kg DM)	CP (% DM)	% Utilisation	Average DM yield (kg/ha)
Swedes ¹	1.00	170–250	1	Winter	11–13	87	12–13	10–11	80	8,000
Kale ²	6.25	150–220	1	Both	15–17	80	10–11	14–17	80	9,000
Stubble turnips ²	5.00	60–100	1	Both	12–15	85	10–11	17–18	80	6,000
Grazing turnips ¹	5.00	60–100	2+	Both	12–15	75	10–11	17–18	75	3,000 (+2000 regrowth)
Rape/kale hybrid ²	6.25	90–110	2*	Winter	12–15	80	10–11	18–19	80	6,000
Forage rape ³	6.25	90–110	2	Both	10–12	80	10–11	19–20	80	4,800

Feeding for Calf Growth

The Duncan family are keen to **maximise** market returns from **increased** calf growth **rates**.

Emily Grant and Graham Lofthouse and discussed the **specifics** to do this including:

- Why set a target?
- Three phases: rearing-growing-finishing.
- Feed and cost considerations.

The full presentation can be found [here](#).

“We have been really pleased with our calves performance this year. With a focus on growth, they have been around 60kg heavier than the previous year's calf crop.”

Rebecca Duncan



Emily and Graham tips for success:

Calf Targets

- 1.2kg/day **birth to weaning** (no creep).
- Calves sold Autumn as **weaned calves** target 300kg>.
- Use **creep feed** strategically to meet a sale target or weight.
- Calf growth target spring sale from shed **0.75-1kg/day 350kg>**.
- Over feeding concentrate in winter to increase growth rates can make stock **fat not fit**. Buyers are looking for frame and potential.
- Calf to **turnout** to graze target **0.75kg/day**.
- Heifers to bull 0.75kg/day on average but use **bulling weight target** (60% cow mature weight) to set growth rate at weaning for heifers. **Fit not fat**.
Heifers with very low growth rates will be at risk of **poorer conception** due to not meeting 60% mature weight.
Calves with very **low growth rates** or high may not be the best choice as a breeding heifer as:
 - Dam could have **poor milk** production
 - Heifer could end up very **large cow** and **less efficient** (higher cost of maintenance).

Feeding for Calf Growth cont.

Get the best from your silage pit

- **Consolidation** of the silage is the **priority** at Harvest. **Thin layers** of **30cm or less**, rolled well.
- **Cling seal** can offer better crop **seal** with a good 100 micron+ top sheet/
Or double sheet for best **preservation**.
- Keep pit **tidy** at feed out and take **small amounts** depth wise off the **face**.
- **Twist grab** down to **stop air** entering the rest of the pit (don't fluff up).
- **Turning** back sheet for **max 1 week** usage will **reduce** aerobic **spoilage**.
- If **mould** is present (top or sides) consider offering to **non-pregnant** stock **to utilise good silage**.
- Any **mouldy or rejected feed** remove from stock feeding area **and replace**.

"Keep your pit tidy at feed out and take small amounts depth wise off the face."

Graham Lofthouse



Baled silage

- **6 layers** of film offer best oxygen barrier and **best preservation** of nutrients.
- **Prevent** birds or vermin from **damaging** bales. If damaged, tape or re-wrap.
- Use **nets** on **stacks**.
- Other **option** from member is place **old unused bales** on top as these **stop** the birds from damaging new crop.

Simple health and performance indicators for calves

- Provide a **dry** and **clean** environment.
- Good **air flow** without draughts at floor level.
- If there are **cobwebs** in the **rafters**, air flow might not be right.
- Get a **diet formulated** (independent advice can be helpful).
- **Weigh** calves **into** shed and **after 6** weeks to see if diet matches **targets** set for **growth**.
- **Clean** fresh **water** is important (clean troughs out regularly).
- Look for **good rumen fill** in front of hook bone.
- Look at **faeces** to see if it's making a "Pat". Very **liquid** or very **firm** may indicate diet **not meeting** animal **requirements**.



MONITOR FARM Scotland

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