

Business Development Groups



Developing knowledge and skills
by working together

Issue 03
Summer 2018



Welcome to the third edition of BDG chat; our online publication to help Business Development Group (BDG) members keep in touch.

This edition provides an update on what has been achieved in the second year of the scheme, early results from our evaluation surveys and updates from the beef, sheep, and dairy sectors on the benefits from the use of analytical services such as blood mineral analysis and soil testing.

Please feedback any comments you have about this edition, or if you have any suggestions around items for future editions, using the contact details across the page.



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Introducing the new Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS)

The Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS) brings together existing advisory functions provided by CAFRE along with agri-environment advisory functions formerly provided by the Department's Countryside Management Unit (CMU). This new service is managed within a single management structure and located across CAFRE's three campuses and the DAERA Direct office network.

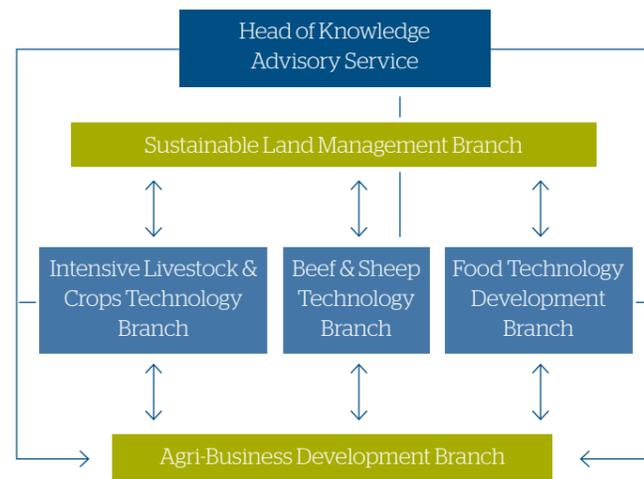
The primary role of the Knowledge Advisory Service is the holistic development of farm and food businesses, where economic and environmental performance are inextricably linked. This will ensure the focus on:

- productivity
- environmental sustainability and
- resilience agendas.

From an environmental perspective, the new service represents an opportunity for DAERA to better integrate environmental advice into its support to the agri-food sector.

The service will be enhanced by the formation of a new Sustainable Land Management Branch, based at Greenmount Campus.

Knowledge Advisory Service



This environmental branch will be delivering Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KTT) across the key areas of

- air quality
- biodiversity
- land management and
- water quality.

Central to this branch is the CAFRE Farm, which remains vital to the delivery of education, training and knowledge transfer to our farming industry.

As the Knowledge Advisory Service develops, we believe it will drive business practices and behaviours that will lead to improved productivity and profitability as well as enhanced environmental performance.

BDG update

BDGs were established in 2016 with the aim of improving the competitiveness and sustainability of farm businesses, with the support of CAFRE. Since the launch of the scheme, together we have:



SIGNED UP
over 3000 participants



CREATED
154 groups



HOSTED
2600 training events



INVOLVED
2700 farm businesses



ACHIEVED
75% attendance at meetings

Payments:

We aim to have payments associated with the second year, with you as soon as possible. If you have received your claim form, please check it, sign it and return it along with a signed membership agreement to KT Administration in the free post envelope to ensure prompt payment.

BDG Evaluation

We are committed to ensuring that the delivery of the scheme is of the highest standard of learning and training. To evaluate this we have three forms of evaluation ongoing:

1. We asked you, our customers, for your views.
2. We asked the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) to inspect our delivery of the BDG scheme.
3. We have employed AFBI to carry out research on the impact of the scheme.

You have said:

Positive points

74% participants reported participation in BDG scheme has significantly or reasonably helped to develop their business already.

85% participants were happy or very happy with the organisation of events

Areas for improvement

Greater pre-planning of event dates

Greater definition and agreement of topics to be covered

How we plan to address these matters

An action plan has been put in place to address the issues highlighted above including agreeing meeting dates and topics at the start of the year.

We are continuing to provide training to all our Advisers in group facilitation and leadership, delivered through Aberystwyth University. This training programme will continue, this year with the aim of improving group dynamics and result in more focused discussion around the issues that matter to you.

BDG news

The BDG Scheme

If you don't measure, you can't manage - the benefits of analytical services!

One important aspect of membership of Business Development Groups (BDG) is the introduction of members to relevant analytical services.

Beef and Sheep group members have been encouraged to avail of animal health and biosecurity plans and silage and soil analysis where they have not previously done so.



Kevin O'Neill, BDG member discussing his farm's animal health plan with Noel Doyle, Three Valleys Vets, Irvinestown, Co Fermanagh

Proactive health plans

1. 700 beef and sheep BDG businesses have worked with their own vet to prepare a plan to improve biosecurity, prevent and treat diseases occurring on their farm.
2. Of these, almost 400 have used blood analysis to improve the nutrition and health of their livestock.
3. Feedback has been positive with the main strengths identified as 'having a chance to discuss ongoing problems when the vet isn't dealing with a sick animal' and 'having a clear set of instructions on when and what to give animals to prevent or treat particular diseases'. Vets have also welcomed the opportunity to deal with clients in a way that a clinical visit doesn't allow.

Silage and soil plans

1. Approximately 400 BDG businesses used silage and soil analysis for the first time to plan feeding and fertiliser applications. This was especially useful during the difficult conditions at the latter end of the grazing season in 2017 which resulted in the earlier housing of livestock.
2. Silage analysis not only highlighted the concentrate savings that good quality silage can bring for all classes of stock but also incorporating other feed stuffs.
3. Many farm businesses have found that soil analysis has highlighted the need to apply lime to get soils into better condition and improve the efficiency of valuable fertiliser and manure nutrients.

BDG news

Protecting your investment - calf health



How much is your heifer enterprise worth? One County Down BDG decided to work out what value is in the dairy heifers on farm and more importantly how to protect this significant investment from the standpoint of calf health.

The session began by discussing and agreeing the main input costs to a dairy calf up to the age of three months. The result surprised some in the group and of course the figure will vary on each farm. Each member calculated their own costs and, following a healthy debate, an average cost was agreed.

The discussion moved to how to protect that investment through calf health. For this part of the discussion Vet, Gareth Bell, took the lead. Each stage of the process from calving, to immediately post calving, to colostrum management, to ventilation and grouping of calves was discussed, with general agreement

that one of the most crucial health factors is managing colostrum.

ZST is a measure of how well colostrum has been managed and absorbed by the calves. Each member of the group were offered up to 10 ZST blood samples paid for through the BDG scheme for calves in their herds. Results for the group show that only 40% of calves have adequate levels meaning there is major room for improvement. The next stage is to review and share which management practices are used by those farms with the best results for colostrum quality.

FFKS News

Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS) is a scheme under the Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 which receives co-financing from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The courses are directly linked to the farm business, providing the farmer, farm family and farm employees with an opportunity to attend short training workshops.

Since 2016 over 3000 farm family members and employees have attended FFKS training across Northern Ireland on:

- Farm Health and Safety
- First Aid
- Farm Business Taxation and Succession Planning
- Pig Health and Biosecurity
- Interpretation of Soil Analysis.

New for 2018

With 100 accidents occurring per month on Northern Ireland farms which need medical attention, the FFKS scheme in conjunction with NFU Mutual are now offering First Aid awareness training. On completion of the course participants will receive a complimentary first aid box.

The first aid topics include:

- Dealing with a medical emergency on farm
- Basic first aid procedures for common farm based injuries
- How to use the contents of a first aid kit
- Technologies to aid lone farm workers in an emergency.



As you can imagine the course is very popular, so don't miss out. All FFKS courses are advertised on CAFRE's webpage. BDG members, their family members and employees can attend FFKS courses, with multiple people per farm business welcome. Alternatively if a group of farmers in a local area wish to host a FFKS training course it can be planned for your local community.

New courses

Two new programmes will be launched in the autumn focusing on **tail biting in pigs** and awareness of **antimicrobial resistance** for livestock sectors.

Who can attend the training?

- Farmers
- Farm family members
- Farm employees

If you would like further information on how to enrol on any of the short courses within the FFKS scheme, please go to:

www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/farm-family-key-skills/

Email: kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk or call CAFRE Knowledge Transfer Administration on 028 9442 6790.