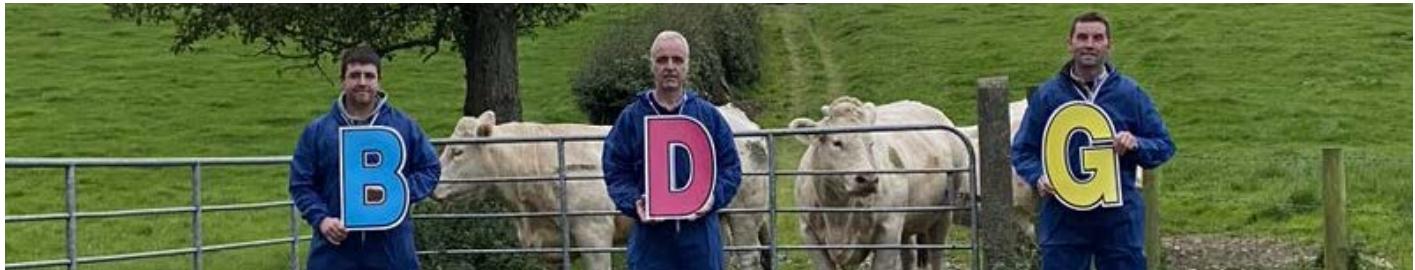


# Business Development Groups

## Chat

Developing knowledge and skills  
by working together

Issue 13  
October 2020



### BDG training events this winter

The benefits of taking part in the BDG Scheme were reinforced in a report published by AFBI earlier this year. Research showed that BDG training has had a positive effect on gross margin for dairy, sheep, suckler cow and beef finishing enterprises. Therefore you are encouraged to continue to attend your group training events during the forthcoming winter months.

Whilst it is not always possible to meet on-farm for training events due to Covid-19 restrictions, CAFRE has developed on-line delivery as an alternative way to provide support to BDG Scheme members. We are continuing to respond to the changing Covid-19 situation and your adviser will remain in touch with you about how your BDG training event will be delivered. This will be in line with PHA and HSENI guidance at any given time to ensure the safety of participants, staff and the wider community.

Pictured above is CAFRE Senior Adviser, John Moore (right) with BDG training event host, Edgar Johnston (centre) and BDG member, Jonny Smyth (left) at a BDG training event in September on Edgar's farm near Cookstown.

### Reminder - Renew your membership agreement in two clicks

BDG members (with the exception of those who joined in 2020) should have recently received an email about renewal of their membership agreement which is a scheme requirement. The new agreement will extend to 31st March 2023 which will reduce paperwork and postage compared with annual renewal. When you open your email, just click 'reply', complete the form and click 'send'. Please renew without delay and thank you if you have already done this.

### HAVE YOUR SAY?

**Email**  
[kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk)

**Website**  
[www.cafre.ac.uk](http://www.cafre.ac.uk)

 FACEBOOK  
**DiscoverCAFRE**

 TWITTER  
**DiscoverCAFRE**



## INDUSTRY TRAINING COURSES **BACK UP AND RUNNING**

CAFRE's Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS) courses recommenced at the start of September. The first courses on offer are Responsible use of Antimicrobials for **Dairy** and **Beef and Sheep** farms. If you are already signed up for this training you'll receive a reminder email a week in advance and a text two days before the date of your event. If you haven't enrolled yet and need to undertake this training in order to meet farm quality assurance requirements you can book a place online through the **CAFRE website** or by contacting the delivery bodies.

In November we will also be offering places on two further courses - Coping with the Pressures of Farming and First Aid Awareness. Keep an eye out for these opening for enrolments on the FFKS pages of our website.

Any queries relating to industry training should be sent to **kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk**.

## SHARING BEST PRACTICE **IN SHEEP FARMING**

The second in a series of Farm Innovation Visits (FIV) dissemination videos is now available online - all you need to do is go to **www.cafre.ac.uk** and log in to the **Student Portal** at the top of the page. Next, select the Farm Innovation Video Library and you'll see well-known County Down sheep farmer Crosby Cleland describe what he saw and learned when he attended the Sheep Innovations in Breeding and Performance Recording in Sheep Production Farm Innovation Visit to England and Wales earlier this year. It's definitely worth a look!

## FARMING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE **CARBON AND FARMING**

As part of the Environmental Farming Business Development Groups programme there will be a focus on carbon within the farming system and why it is important. Carbon is continuously being transferred between different forms and this is commonly known as the carbon cycle. It is a component of the air we breathe, the fuels we burn and the soils we farm. As part of group discussions we will focus on measuring the impact of farming using carbon footprinting. We will highlight the benefits of carbon footprinting and the methods used to manage carbon within your farming system. Improving carbon management not only benefits the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also improves business sustainability.



## VISITS OPEN TO CAFRE **TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION FARMS**

Technology Demonstration Farms (TDFs) provide a network of local farms offering other farmers the opportunity to see new technology and innovations which they could adopt themselves.

To date CAFRE has recruited four dairy, four sheep and ten beef farmers to demonstrate technologies within a range of themes including feed efficiency, mobility improvement, grassland management and breeding. A number of visits to the dairy farms had already happened before Covid-19 with excellent feedback and CAFRE is now taking bookings for future visits to all 18 TDF farms.

Dairy TDF farmer John Rafferty from Poyntzpass, Co Down says, "I have had five TDF visits to my farm to date and the feedback has been very positive indeed with excellent discussion having taken place. I am really looking forward to welcoming more groups on to the farm again."

CAFRE will also be appointing two additional Pig TDFs in autumn 2020 and applications will be invited from other agricultural sectors in due course.

One of the Beef Fertility TDF farmers, John Egerton, from Roslea in Co Fermanagh was recently filmed by the BBC on his home farm. The feature was shown on BBC ONE Home Ground on Monday 28th September and discussed the advantages of TDFs. If you missed it, you can catch up on [BBC iPlayer](#).

Details of the TDF's, and how to book a visit are available on the CAFRE website:

[www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/  
technology-demonstration-farms/](http://www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/technology-demonstration-farms/)

Currently CAFRE is taking group bookings only by emailing:

[kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk)



## PREPARING THE YARD FOR WINTER

Mary Ann Alexander, CAFRE Agri-Environment Adviser, based in Magherafelt sums up the key tasks to carry out now so that preparations are made for the fast-approaching winter months.

With Northern Ireland weather proving predictably unpredictable this autumn, it is never too soon to think about preparing housing and yards for the winter months. It is a good idea for farmers to think ahead so they can actively move forward in preparing the yard. The following is some helpful guidance on what can be done ahead of time.

Planning what fields are going to receive any slurry that may be in tanks can be helpful, although remember the deadline for slurry spreading is 15th October (midnight). From midnight 30th September to 15th October, and during February the buffer zones for slurry spreading near waterways have increased. These are 10m to 15m from a waterway and from 20m to 30m beside a lake. The maximum application rate is reduced from 50m<sup>3</sup> (4500gal/acre) to 30m<sup>3</sup> (2700gal/ac).

Furthermore, all gutters and downpipes must be checked. Any necessary repairs should be made to avoid water running freely over dirty yards. Most agricultural pollution incidents are due to slurry, silage effluent and uncollected dirty water entering waterways, so ensure that all gullies are clear and run off from bedded sheds and silage pits can freely run into collection tanks without overflowing onto the yard. In sheds it is important to check that drinkers are all filling correctly and that there are no leaking pipes. Leaking drinkers will add

to the amount of water used on farm, increasing costs and increasing the chance of overflow onto the yard. Protecting pipes from frost will help to reduce the risk of burst pipes during cold weather. Clean out sheds and clear passageways.

Preparations of calving pens for autumn calving should be completed in advance whilst checking calving gates and other handling facilities are in good repair. Also, locate the calving jack and make sure it is in working order! Disinfection of pens is vital for housing freshly calved cows to prevent infection from any remaining bacteria or pathogens from the previous calving season. When vaccinating calves against pneumonia, make sure to finish the course before the critical housing period. Moreover, if you are working with a spring calving suckler herd, it is best practice to get cows scanned. Any empty cows can be culled out of the herd and replaced. There is no point in feeding an empty cow all winter to discover she is not in calf in the spring.



Farmers must check all gates, feeding barriers and handling facilities to ensure they are in good repair, taking note of anything that needs any attention or needs to be replaced.

Additionally, make sure that any maintenance necessary has been completed on shear grabs, loaders and diet feeders. It is a good time to think about getting the diet feeder calibrated to save on feeding costs. Check that all lights and sensors are working properly. You may need to get an electrician to look at any faulty light fixtures or wiring. Having handling facilities well-lit makes them safer to work in, especially as evenings get darker.

It is important to remember health and safety on farm. When working at heights make sure that you are not alone, and that you are using the appropriate equipment. If moving machinery, be aware of where other people are and ensure mirrors, windows and lights are clear of dirt that may hinder their function. It is important for farmers to think safe when working around the yard.

With regards to winter feeding, think ahead about getting silage sampled from the pit, which can happen six weeks after ensiling. A silage budget is a useful strategy to calculate prior to the winter housing period to avoid running low at the end of the housing interval and account for any reserves which may be necessary. This is something that CAFRE Beef and Sheep Advisers will be looking at and discussing with their BDG members over the coming months.

## BVD ERADICATION - CHECK THE STATUS **OF EVERY ANIMAL IN YOUR HERD**

The BVD Eradication Scheme is a unique industry led programme which, unlike the TB and Brucellosis Programmes in NI, is coordinated and managed on behalf of farmers by Animal Health and Welfare Northern Ireland (AHWNI). Good progress has been made in reducing the number of BVD positive calves being born since tissue testing became compulsory in 2016. Latest figures show that on 1st September 2020 there were 293 BVD Positive animals alive in 206 different herds, representing more than a 50% reduction in Positive animal numbers in the previous 12 months.

The eradication of BVD in NI is achievable, however this will only happen if herd keepers take the necessary steps that will allow them to promptly identify and remove all infected animals.

You should check the BVD status of every animal in your herd (particularly noting the status of bought in stock), either via APHIS Online or an APHIS print-out from your local DAERA Direct office, and take action as follows:

| <b>APHIS status</b> | <b>Meaning of status</b>  | <b>What action should I take</b>   |
|---------------------|---|--|
| BVDN                | Direct negative test result.  | No action required.  |
| INDNEG              | Dam of a BVDN calf so can be given indirect negative status.  | No action required.  |
| 'Blank'             | Born before 01/03/16 where the BVD status is unknown (no BVD status will be shown on APHIS).                        | No action is required under legislation currently, however you may wish to establish the BVD status of all animals in your herd. A sample may be taken by your vet using a button tag or a blood sample. |
| BVDP                | Direct positive test result.  | Isolate and cull the animal ASAP or isolate, retest (at least 21 days after the first test) and cull if a further positive result is returned.   |
| BVDI                | Direct inconclusive test result.  | Retest (at least 21 days after the first test) the animal ASAP and cull if a positive result is returned.  |
| DAMPI               | Dam of a BVDP or BVDI calf.   | Isolate and get your vet to take a blood sample for testing ASAP.  |
| OFFPI               | Offspring of a BVDP dam.  | Isolate and get your vet to take a blood sample for testing ASAP.  |
| BVDU                | Born since 01/03/16 and BVD status is unknown - either because it has not been tested or the sample was inadequate. | A button tag may be applied and an ear tissue tag sample submitted for testing or a blood sample may be taken by your vet for testing.   |

Before moving cattle, check their BVD status to ensure that they are not restricted.

**Top tip - Check your herd's BVD statuses before your next TB test. When cattle are in the crush for the TB test, get your private vet to blood sample any which need to be tested.**

It is also important that you prevent BVD infection entering your herd by:

- only buying BVD negative (or indirect negative) animals
- keeping purchased in-calf cows or heifers separate to the main herd until they have calved, with the calf testing negative
- preventing direct nose-to-nose contact with other herds by maintaining good stock-proof boundary fencing that will prevent break-ins or break-outs
- reducing the risk of BVD-contaminated material coming on to your farm via people, machinery or equipment.

Eradicating BVD from your herd will improve the health and welfare of your animals and can also result in lower production costs, decrease need for and use of anti-microbials and reduce animal-related greenhouse gas emissions.

John Sands, CAFRE Adviser, is a member of the BVD Implementation Group. He says: "All BDG beef and dairy farmers need to take the issue of this viral infection seriously and make it a priority in their animal health planning.

Advice and support is on hand through your CAFRE Adviser, your veterinary practitioner, and on the [AHWNI website](#). I urge everyone to make use of these resources to answer any questions you may have or to further your knowledge on the subject.

"As in all such cases, prevention is better than cure so plan ahead to protect your herd and practise good bio-security."

## DAIRY CENTRE **UPDATE**

The Dairy Centre at CAFRE consists of 150 ha of grassland and around 30 ha of arable cropping including, winter wheat, winter and spring oats, potatoes and forage maize. The grassland supports a grass-based dairy enterprise which consists of 190 cows yielding on average 8,932 litres.

Staff at the Dairy Centre are continuing to dry off cows and September is our lowest month in terms of milk production. We are currently milking 96 cows, averaging 17.6 litres with 7.6 litres coming from forage. Calving will commence very shortly with 37 cows due to calve during the last week of the month and a further 137 cows due to calve before Christmas.

With ground conditions poor, cows have been housed during the night for the past three weeks. Cows have been fed high quality baled silage taken from surplus paddocks during the summer. This approach has helped maintain good dry matter intakes and our milk from forage figure is two litres more than the same period last year. The good dry matter intakes has also helped to maintain excellent milk quality of 4.11 butterfat and 3.41 protein.



## COVID-19 **LATEST INFORMATION**

The DAERA website is updated frequently to keep you up to date with any developments which could impact or affect you. Find out the [latest information](#).

Safeguarding your health is crucial and you should follow all guidelines to stay safe and protect your family, friends and work colleagues. Advice is also available on the [Public Health Agency](#) website.

**MISSED OUR PREVIOUS ISSUES?  
CATCH UP HERE**

[Issue 12](#)