

Report on Farm Innovation Study Trip to Scotland - September 2022

Group led by Senan White and Gareth Beacom, CAFRE.

Day 1 – 28/09/2022

Scottish Rural College Hill and Mountain Research Centre, Crianlarich

Farm Highlights

- Talks presented by Prof Davy McCracken, Head of Centre, Dr Claire Morgan-Davies, Senior Research Officer and Dr John Holland – Biodiversity Research Office
- 2225ha upland and hill research farm. 70ha grass and 150ha semi-improved grassland – rest mountain land
- 1500 breeding ewes in 3 flocks and 30 breeding cattle
 - Kirkton flock – high intervention
 - Auchtertyre flock – high health (outdoors)
 - Corry flock – Tyndrum – commercial flock
- Mainly Scottish Blackfaced and Llyen ewes
- Land rented from Scottish government
- Established in 1969 to look at agricultural and environmental challenges.
- Receives 3.5 – 4.5 m of rain on the hill; 2.5-3.5m rain at yard level
- Undertaking several trials under various European funding sources with results being awaited. Trials included a Feeding trial on DLWG and a Grass to Gas Project
- Looking at how to reduce the farm input costs
- EID is vital to the running of the farm especially in relation to selecting rams for breeding through Signet recording
- Barrenness rate only 6-10%
- Weigh lambs at birth and 6 weeks to identify best mothers.
- Blackface lambs achieving 250 grams at minute (end of Sept) on grass and meal.
- Handling facilities specifically designed handling yard, - 1m sheeted gates (bolted to ground)
- Looking at selecting ewes that don't require supplementary feeding using GPS collars and responders.
- Aim to maintain drainage, nutrient level and pH (target of 5.9). Lime every 3 years
- Recording system – farm IT, Pratley handling system and Tru test scales.
- Reseeding with multiple grass species to suit low Nitrogen levels incl. Cocksfoot, Timothy, perennial ryegrass.

- Looking at native tree planting in certain areas for Carbon mitigation as well as peatland restoration work and carbon sequestration work.

Day 2 – 29/09/2022

Farm Visit

Farm owned by Willy and Daye Tucker – retired vets. Farmed by Lawrence Martin– farm manager/tenant farmer

Farm Highlights

- 400 acres – incl 130 acres woodland (farm carbon negative)
- Interested in regenerative agriculture
- Not organic but farm managed with “organic principles”
 - No Fert, little ploughing, Multi-species swards (MSS) being trialed
- 450 Lleyn ewes – majority bred pure with some Charolais/beltex crosses used
- Small number on Maedi Visna accredited Herdwick’s introduced.
- Black Galloway cattle introduced – Put to white shorthorn bull to breed blue grey’s
- 40 dairy calves bought in winter time and B + B cattle at winter also
- Handling facilities – Ritchie combi clamp, Tru-test scales, Shearwell tags and Agriwebb farm management package
- Target worming – worm anything below 200g DLWG
- Sire referenced for growth rate and worm control
- On-track – Agri-cision used - £900
 - Used for fert spreading and weed wiping etc – compatible with tractor/quad via magnets.
- Te pari drench gun £2,500
 - Reduced dosage used from approx. 50 litres to 12litres/yr.
- Twice yearly animal health plan
- Scanned 2.02 and sold 1.90
- Triplets on heatwave feeder.
- Benchmarks’s through Lleyn Gold, also part of Next Generation NFU programme
- Maedi Visna accredited – sells majority ewe lambs for breeding 80% home sales 20% mart
- 12 acres MSS – plantain/chicory/cocksfoot/Timothy/R + W clover
- Achieved 360g DLWG – strip grazed with back fence

Day 3 – 30/09/22

Farm Visit 1

Farmed by Bobby Lennox, Luss, Loch Lomond under a tenancy agreement

Farm Highlights

- 5,000 acres – Tenants family since 1750's – 11th gen. Rented off Luss estates
- Yard 1,000ft – top 2,250 ft
- 5 miles by 5 miles
- 100 inches rainfall
- 1100 blackface ewes
- 25 Luing suckler cows
- Lambs 20th April – 10th May
- Nucleus flock recorded and non-recorded flock on hill also.
- Ram lamb ran with flock for 17 days and older ram for 1 week.
- Homebred blackface – no rams purchased since 1993
 - Av weight 50kg
- 5% Barren
- Started selecting for easicare in 1979 and signet recording since 1989
- Lambs tagged at birth, 8 wk wt, 20 wk wt and backfat scan.
- Ewes – gimmer weight at tugging and sire groups recorded.
- De-select for prolificacy and size
- Pull 10 – 15 lambs annually – 4 – 6.5kg birthweight
- Recorded flock kept entire
- Non recorded – wethers
 - Castrated with 'Num-nuts'. Automatic castration and injection gun – injecting local anaesthetic. Costs 50 – 60p/lamb. Done at 5-6 weeks, can use up to 8 weeks.
- Lambs to grass – Oct and housed on return in Jan. 25 -30kg
- Target LW 42 – 45kg, 3L – 3H, 19kg DW
- 20 – 25 recorded lambs kept or sold
 - Selecting mostly for maternal and muscle
- Health plan
- Wean in Aug
 - Hep – P, Zolvix and keeled
 - 2nd Hep – P end of Sept and Cydectin
- Ewes fluke treatment alternated between Flukiver and Trodax
- FEC for fluke and worms
- Crovect used pre lambing for ticks

- Lambs done at 2 weeks old

Agri-tourism

- Luxury shepherd huts (Glamping) with hot tub overlooking Loch Lomond.
- Bus tours taken to view farm
- Tours of lambing shed 3 times daily over lambing (booked via Eventbrite)
- Day in the life of a farmer experience offered also
- Vital to spread message of good farming practice to the general public

Farm Visit 2

CochnoFarm – Glasgow Veterinary School farm

- Teach vet students
- 50% overseas
- 400ft – 1200ft above sea level
- Aim to be Carbon neutral in 10 -15 years – planting 10 – 12 ha in trees.
- 50 – 55 dairy cows milked through parlour
- 30 sucklers
- 400 easycare ewes
- Previously mules but 2-3% OPA fatalities, maggots problem (public access) + labour problems on uni farm.
- Benefits of easycare – closed flock, uniform flock (for research projects), labour
- Lambed end of March onwards (dictated annually by student holidays)
 - Housed in either sheds/polytunnel.
- 2.02 scanning
- 70 pet lambs – pets not castrated
- Worm dose anything below 140g DLWG
- Single sire mating (due to research projects)
- Plan to signet record
- Ewe mature size 65 – 85kg
- 42 – 45 kg LW, 16 – 23 kg DW