



Cairngorms Monitor Farm

*George and Charles Gordon
Lost Farm, Strathdon*



Report from Meeting held on the 15th February 2012

FUTURE EVENTS

Next Lost Meeting

June 2012

Useful Contacts

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INTRODUCTION

Around 35 - 40 people attended the meeting. Alister Laing gave an introduction for the meeting and introduced Charles, which lead onto Charles going over what has been happening since the last meeting.

- Cows have been calving with some needing assistance.
- The cows on the farm don't get a second chance if they don't hold to the bull as cull trade is good at the moment. The group agreed with this policy.
- Liver fluke has been a problem with lamb deaths. The source could be the wet areas of land at Candacraig.
- Any heifers are being sold on rather than being kept for replacements.
- Some wind damage with a float being blown over.
- Charles is expecting good prices for selling heifers with calves at foot. Heifers have also been tested for Johnes disease and proved clear at the time of testing.
- Any heifers that are purchased are bought from special BVD sales.
- There has never been a problem with fluke before but the lamb deaths have been caused by liver fluke damage. The lambs were dying between November and the New Year.
- The breeding sheep will be treated before lambing. The treatment is cheap costing £5 per litre which works out at around 7-9p/sheep. The group were agreeing that fluke is a big problem.

GPS SOIL SAMPLING

David Ross introduced George Duncan and James Hardie to talk about GPS soil sampling.

1 member in the group uses GPS to soil sample, 2 people routine soil sample and the majority do random soil sampling.

Most of the group don't routinely soil sample because they know their own ground and the cost of sampling.

Some fields were sampled on the monitor farm by SAC and George Duncan's GPS system. A total of 36.86ha were sampled.

The pH of the fields were similar from both tests, however the GPS sampling provides maps showing which parts of the fields have different pH and levels of P and K.

The fields sampled showed that the ground has low PH's and many of the fields are low in both P and K . This has resulted from a lack of lime being spread over the years and the fertiliser regime not fully meeting the demands of the crop.

LIVER FLUKE

David Ross introduced Philip Skuce (Moredun Research) and David Miskelly (Woodside Vet) to speak about liver fluke.

Philip and David highlighted the problems and solutions with liver fluke.

Liver fluke can cause 30% reduction in lambs live weight and can take an extra 80 days to finish cattle.

Adult stock should be treated in spring, autumn and winter.

Cattle should be treated as well as sheep if there is a problem on the farm.

Rabbits and hares, which are abundant on the farm, can be carriers of liver fluke. Once liver fluke appears on a farm it will always be there but can be controlled.

It is suspected that the lambs picked up the liver fluke while at Candacraig.

At Lost, the plan to treat liver fluke is as follows:

Sheep

- To treat ewes pre tupping and pre lambing
- Use a product containing Triclabendazole (TBZ) when drenching for trace elements
- Treat at weaning
- Lambs to be treated with a flukicide that has TBZ if there is no resistance
- Carry out an egg count in the autumn to monitor the problem

Cattle

- Blood test the cattle while testing for BVD
- If positive for fluke adopt a treatment programme
- Treat young stock at housing and when going back out to pasture
- Either treat cows in December or February (once a year)

For cattle and sheep abattoir reports can be sourced to see how many livers were condemned with liver fluke.

SUGGESTED FERTILISER AND TRIALS FROM THE GROUP

Silage fields

- Shut off all spring then top dress with 1cwt
- 3cwt 22.4.14
- 16.16.16 can be expensive
- Scot phos
- 4cwt 24.4.14 in two applications
- 16.16.16 and top dress
- 20.10.10 TSP in two applications
- 22.4.14+S and 1cwt of TSP

Grazing fields

- Less K
- Depends on age of grass
- 3.5cwt 25.5.5 in two applications
- 27.5.5

Barley fields

- 2cwt 14.14.21 and 1cwt 34.5N
- 2cwt 16.16.16 and 1cwt 34.5N
- 16.16.16 and top dress
- 2 ton lime, 10.26.26 and half bag of N
- 2cwt 14.14.21 and 34.5 N

Trials for the farm

- Food compost waste
- Paper waste crumble to spread with muck
- Grass Establishment – Disc vs Plough
- Red clover mix
- Try Duncan drill
- High level of white clover mix for lambs
- Chicory
- Prilled calcium
- TSP vs compound
- Bagged N vs stitch in
- Forage crop after silage

QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE GROUP

Q. Do you give your cows a second chance to get back in calf?

A. No, they are good money at the moment and caesarean can be a problem at the next calving.

Q. Have you ever treated for fluke?

A. No, I think the lambs off Candacraig are the problem.

Q. Is a Johnes test reliable on heifers?

A. No, but all are tested so they can be sold as 'tested Johnes free at testing'.

Q. How did you know you had a liver fluke problem?

A. Got the vet to come and PM the dead lambs and we found liver fluke there.

Q. How do you decide whether to sample your field in hectares or acres?

A. Hectares can be cheaper but acres can be more reliable.

Q. What is the best pH for barley?

A. 6.0-6.1 or 6.2 if winter barley is involved in the rotation.

Q. What is the best pH for forage crops?

A. 6.5 but depends on rotation.

Q. Problems with clubroot and pH?

A. The higher the pH, the more problems with clubroot. Kale can be a hungry crop and will cause problems if used over and over.

Q. What fertiliser are you using on silage fields and barley?

A. Silage 4cwt 22.4.14+S and barley 2cwt 14.14.21 with 1cwt 34.5N.

Q. What lime do you buy?

A. Depends on prices. Dufftown lime is currently £16 delivered while lime/magnesium mix is £30 tonne.

Q. What do you recommend for low pH in grass?

A. Break up the grass field and put back it grass.

Q. Would you use a catch crop in your rotations?

A. Bad rabbit problem wouldn't make it viable in some fields.

Q. Would you treat cows as well as sheep for fluke?

A. Yes, treat cattle as well if the sheep have fluke.

Q. Is there a non-danger time with fluke?

A. Autumn can be a risk period however fluke won't show signs for maybe 3 months.

Q. Can liver fluke survive in silage?

A. No, as silage is too acidic, however hay can be a problem.

Q. Can ploughing grassland help to reduce fluke?

A. Not really as liver fluke can breed quickly and there is always some left on the ground.

Q. Dose dozing the lambs cure their livers?

A. Really depends on how bad the liver is.

Q. Is there any value to testing for liver fluke?

A. Its worth knowing if fluke is present on any farm so it can be treated correctly. LMO can be used to cover some cost of testing, however by using LMO grazing has to be restricted in high risk periods which, in turn, would not be viable for most farmers.

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