



Planning for Profit Workshop Scammadale Farm, Argyll 2nd October 2014

Summary

Overview:

A lively and wide ranging discussion was enjoyed by the 33 farmers who attended this workshop. We were blessed with sunny weather, though there was a cold wind.

Niall Campbell, SAC Consulting, facilitated the workshop, with Rhidian Jones, SAC Consulting, attending as the livestock specialist. Neil and Hazel McCorkindale hosted the meeting.

As a summary of the day we challenged the group to come up with answers to several key questions. Results are as follows:

Q1: What are the two most important issues to get right, to ensure a profitable upland/hill suckler enterprise?

- Target one living calf per year
- Good herd health
- Good bull management
- Control costs
- Use a suitable breed
- Tight calving
- Focus on your market
- Strong culling policy, including culling for temperament and cull cows that regularly produce your bottom end calves.
- Good grassland management
- Have a simple management system
- Need good handling facilities (inc weigh scales).

Q2: Write down one suggestion or idea to improve the profitability of the Scammadale suckler cow system?

- Improve grassland management
- Buy a weigh scale and monitor cow, heifer and calf weights
- Tougher culling policy
- Change to all spring calving, winter more cows away and get rid of all silage machinery

Q3: Write down one thing you have learned/seen today that you would implement at home

- Simplicity of one breeding policy and focussed market
- Will focus on cow efficiency eg using weaning weights, set targets
- Will look to improve grassland management
- Try and tighten calving period
- Change to a breed that suits the area
- Buy replacements, rather than try to breed own
- Consider away wintering

Photos of Workshop (courtesy of Rhidian Jones)



Host Neil McCorkindale explaining his system



Niall waxing lyrical



Luing cows with Simluing calves



Simluing calves at creep feeder