Farming Connect Management Exchange

# Ceredig Evans

# North Wales and Chester

# Autumn block calving and making the most of grazing

# 25/02/2020

# **Background**

# Erw Fawr is a family farm ran by myself, my wife Sara and parents Ann and Ifan. We are a dairy farm currently milking 300 cows across 474 acres. We milk twice a day and calve all year round. We use Genus Reproductive Management Systems (RMS) to serve the cows and feed the stock a mix of blend and silage to maximise output. We are currently working with Precision Grazing to measure the pasture to make sure we maximise yield from forage.

My aim during the Management Exchange was to visit a variety of dairy farms that are using different systems to ours who achieves high yields from forage and grazing, as well as considering the benefits of block calving to see if this is a system I would like establish. By using these contacts, I will be able to see businesses that have previously received guidance in making the right business moves and are achieving good results.

# **Itinerary**

25/02/2020

Visit 1

**Name:** Huw Jones

**Address:** Wigfair, St Asaph

Huw has a high yielding herd that is housed through winter and grazed on paddocks in the summer. He has a Holstein pedigree bull and uses a Genus PLMI bull. His emphasis is on producing high quality silage in a multi-cut system. He also focuses on growing good crops of maize to increase his yields and cow health. Huw was very open when talking about his system. We were able to discuss his achievements as well as the problems he had faced in getting where he’s at and how he overcame them. We were able to discuss similar issues and brainstormed ideas to combat these.

From this visit, I decided that growing maize again in 2020 would work for our farm system, having not grown maize for a few years.

**Visit 2**

**Name:** Dafydd Evans

**Address:** Kilford, Denbigh

Dafydd had converted from all year round calving system to fully autumn block calving with his herd of Swedish red cross bred herd. His first and second lactation with the herd had gone well. Dafydd has a very good handle on his grass system and growth. He was in the process of putting a new rotary parlour as the herd was growing. We spoke at length about the decision he had made. He preferred the idea of block calving and the ease of management of serving, calving and starting milking all together.

From this visit, I decided that I would move some of the herd towards an autumn block calving as it is something I have been considering. As our herd is increasing, it is something we could trial in 2021.

26/02/2020

**Visit 3**

**Name:** Tom Bramall

**Address:** Waverton, Chester

Tom had a very high yielding herd of cows feeding total mixed ration (TMR) with good quality silage and maize and fed various moist feeds. Tom made the best use of his land and sent the cows out to graze in the summer months. From this visit, I was encouraged to make the best use of pasture and will continue to measure the paddocks to get the best out of them.

# **Next steps**

Trial a small group from the herd for autumn block calving in 2021.

Continue to measure and graze platform.

Grow maize.

Plan silage cuts, including bales and storage for winter feeding.

# **Key messages to the industry**

1. If you’re considering making a change, it is best practice to go and see other farmers who have made this change to discuss ideas, experiences and concerns you may have.
2. Attention to detail is key when planning for the year ahead.
3. Make sure you do lots of research in order to make any necessary changes.
4. Any decision has to suit you and your farm.