Study Visits

In September the NextGen Dairy Farmers Group undertook a study visit to see some of the most progressive dairy farmers in the UK, including Metcalfe Farms who won the National Milk Records (NMR) Gold Cup for 2018. With regard to current milk prices, the group was focused on cost of production based on pence per litre (PPL). Click here to read their report.

Demonstration Site Projects

Increasing utilisation from grazed grass and milk from forage on an all-year round calving (AYR) dairy system

Erw Fawr demonstration site in Holyhead, Anglesey, wants to improve the total yield from forage and grazed grass from their 250-strong all-year-round calving (AYR) Holstein herd. During the autumn of 2019 the farm infrastructure has been mapped and the information entered onto the grass management software, AgriNet. A platemeter has been used by farm staff up to the end of November to ensure the last round of grazing by the low yielders allows for a spring wedge ready to turn out again early in March. High yielding cows up to 150 days in-milk will be housed all year round, ensuring valuable and quality grass silage and maize can be utilised efficiently into milk.

Evaluating the economics and practicalities of rearing dairy heifers on an upland sheep farm

Llys Dimmael Islaf focus farm near Corwen is an upland sheep farm experienced in rotationally grazing lambs. Their new enterprise is rearing 20 Holstein Freisian dairy heifers to sell after they calve as fresh in-milk heifers at two years of age. Very little is understood about the management of dairy heifers on grass within a highly stocked rotational grazing system, where the main principles of utilisation and management tend to be based on the grazing practices of the mature dairy herd. This project will monitor heifer growth rates against pre and post grazing covers with an aim to better understand how Holstein Friesian heifers can be grazed within a rotational cell grazing system, with the aim of maximizing animal performance on a low-cost feeding regime.

The heifers will be outwintered on fodderbeet and round bale silage during their first winter. The heifer calves have been self-feeding behind an electric fence at the rate of 0.97 metres of fodder beet per day within a 40m wide strip, supplemented by round bale silage fed from a ring feeder.

Average weight of the calves on 16 November was 246kg. Daily liveweight gain averaged 0.89kg DLWG entirely on home-grown forage diet of ad lib fodder beet and round bale silage at 6kg/head/day.

Click here to read their report.
Mentoring Programme

90 DAIRY FARMERS currently being mentored

Click here to access the full Mentor Directory.

Surgeries

28 Surgeries Held

2 DIGITAL BUSINESS REVIEW SURGERIES

9 PLANNING SURGERIES

6 SUCCESSION SURGERIES

Case Study

Anwen Jones, an independent nutritionist, visited a Carmarthen dairy discussion group to look at the topic of feeding dairy cows to enable the farmers to make important nutrition management decisions in order to optimise both the health and performance of the herd. Anwen began discussions on the importance of dry cow nutrition covering:

- The importance of dry cow management
- Ideal cow condition for the dry period
- Dry cow management influence on health of cow at calving
- Calving difficulties, milk fever and retained cleanings related to poor dry cow management and nutrition
- Dry cow management influence on fresh cow dry matter intakes
- Nutrition, vitamins and trace elements for the dry cow

Rumen health risk factors were then discussed and Anwen emphasised the importance of minimising these risks as they can cause ill health to the cow resulting in a decrease in production and fertility performance. Risk factors to the rumen include:

- Acid loading of forage base
- Starch level and degradability
- Forage Concentrate ratio
- Concentrates feeding method
- Grain processing
- Lying times
- TMR sorting

Anwen focused on acid loading and how this can be prevented. Mixing various silage cuts whilst feeding was discussed at this point also as this is being done at one of the farms, and Anwen emphasised the importance of this in achieving a consistent diet throughout the winter.

The problems encountered with both wet silage and mature silage were then discussed and how each can cause problems to the dairy herd. For example, the mature silage is likely to be lower in D-value and protein and has a higher risk of mould and heating. The wet silage on the other hand can also be a problem in that it may cause a high acid load thus reducing the rumen pH resulting in reduced intakes.

Strategic Awareness Events

25 Events Held with 577 attendees

PDP WORKSHOP

RENEWABLE ENERGY

ACCESSING TECHNICAL ADVICE

Securing your farm business for FUTURE GENERATIONS – is a joint venture an option?

*Strategic Awareness Event themes are often cross-sectoral that tend to attract farmers from all sectors, including the Dairy sector.

Venture

3 NEW DAIRY PROVIDERS

5 NEW DAIRY SEEKERS

6 POTENTIAL DAIRY MATCH ESTABLISHED DURING THE QUARTER

Number of opportunities offered:

4 DAIRY UNITS

Total land area offered:

434 HECTARES (DAIRY UNITS ONLY)

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*Surgeries are cross-sectoral events and a mixture of farmers from all sectors attend, including farmers from the Dairy sector.

Training

During this period, 63 instances of face to face training were delivered to the Dairy sector.

E-learning

Some of the e-learning courses completed within this period:

- CATTLE PNEUMONIA
- CATTLE LAMENESS
- SLURRY MANAGEMENT
- COLOSTRUM AND CALVES

Click here to visit the website.