

Demonstration Network

Bryn Farm – Suckler herd efficiency

With around 75 cattle at Bryn Farm, initial historic evaluation was carried out on the herd's performance and health status. Initial testing was undertaken to assess the Johnes status of the farm to ensure that there were no underlying health issues. With the herd testing negative to Johnes and BVD, we could focus on collecting data on performance. Huw and Meinir kept records on cow weight, calving date, calving difficulties and other observations, and regularly weighed the calves. Grass growth was measured every fortnight, allowing for detailed grass budgeting and forecasting any surplus or deficits, which aids in management decisions. Working out the physical and financial performance of the herd at Bryn Farm provided us with insight and a starting point for drawing up an action plan to rectify problems and monitor performance.

The project at Bryn aimed to:

1. Improve the profit margin of the suckler herd by monitoring and improving performance
2. Make use of technology to record data, allowing ease of monitoring and evaluation
3. Identify low-performing cows that can be removed from the herd

Benefits have been seen across various areas at Bryn, including better grassland management and infrastructure allowed for rotational grazing, with no fertiliser requirement to sustain the same Kg/DM/ha/day over the three years (Figure 1). This equates to a financial saving of £16,875 in fertiliser costs.

Year	2020	2021	2021
Kg/DM/ha/day	34.1	27.9	28.8

Figure 1.

Bryn has also improved calving spread year on year, and by 2022, managed to increase the number of cattle calving in the first three weeks by 27%.

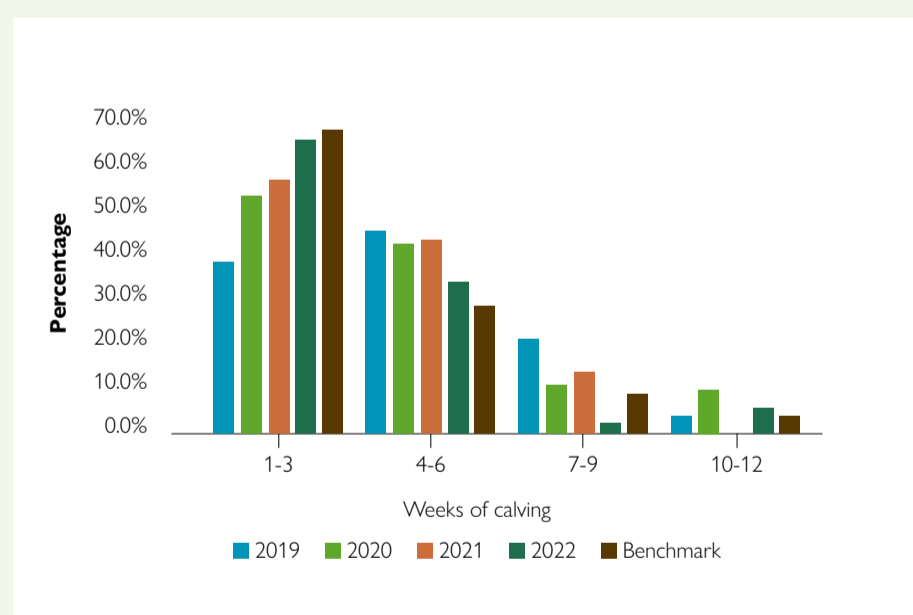


Figure 2: percentage of calving per week over four years.

Ensuring cows are managed according to the appropriate body condition score for the stage of production to optimise use of resources and fertility, and selecting bulls for calving ease, has resulted in a rise from 88% to 94% in the number of calves reared. The financial benefit accrued (an extra £96/cow, or £7,200 across the herd) from the increasing number of calves reared and a compact calving is substantial.

Much of the improvement is down to good management, but this is helped by having a medium-sized maternal cow type – in this case, Salers. The key maternal characteristics are good fertility, early sexual maturity, good fleshing ability, milkiness, longevity and easy calving. Good calf growth rates are achieved, together with the store cattle ability to gain condition at grass.

Nantglas – Improving fertility of a split block-calving system

The project aims to make improvements to boost the six-week calving percentage and six-week in calf percentage. Changes to several management practices were made (as there was no single cause to the poor fertility), aiming to tighten the calving block whilst ensuring the empty percentage was below 10%.

Autumn calvers were scanned in April 2022, and the results highlighted +80% six-week in-calf rate, which successfully reduced the 12-week calving block to under 10 weeks. This has resulted in £20,475 (without intervention costs) of extra profit to the business. Intervention costs came in under £5,500 over the last year, and covered the following:

- **Heifer synchrony:** £5/dose x 2 doses x 25 heifers + visit and 1hr vet's time x2 = £530
- **Mag supplement:** Mag boluses for high risk cows x £2.50/bolus x 10 cows = £25
- **Collars:** £2500 a year / 210 cows
- **Record keeping & analysis:** £1000 - £2000 - extra hour a day for, say, 40 days for Iwan, plus, say, 8 hours of vet consultancy.
- **Metrichecking:** 4 hours vet time + visit + 10 metricures @£12.50ea = £595
- **Non-cycler exam + treatments:** 2 hours vet time + visit + 8 CIDR synchs @£17.50ea = £420

TOTAL = £5500

The final part of the project will be completed after autumn calving 2022, where the final figures will be produced to provide data for four full calving blocks.

EIP Wales



Lameness in dairy cattle

Despite an increase in activity surrounding lameness in the last 20 years, there has been little improvement in the prevalence of lameness, with approximately 1 in 3 cows in Wales lame at any one time. A new, refreshed approach is required that offers alternative methods of knowledge exchange, and easier ways of farmers engaging in lameness control.

The aim of the project is to determine the impact of different methods of knowledge transfer on farmer perception of lameness, their knowledge and behaviour change. Often the barrier to improvement is not a lack of knowing what to do, but how to practically implement ideas, particularly when time and resources are limited.

Twenty-four dairy farmers from across south-east Wales are taking part in this two-year project, which aims to discover the best method of engaging with farmers in lameness management.

[Perception of lameness in the Welsh dairy industry.](#)

Knowledge Exchange Hub

Technical articles produced by the KE HUB:

- INTERNAL PARASITE CONTROL AND GOATS: IMPLICATIONS FOR A GROWING INDUSTRY
- LAMENESS AND LEARNING: KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE IN ANIMAL WELFARE
- THE IMPORTANCE OF CALF PRE-WEANING NUTRITION
- THE EFFECT OF PRODUCTION SYSTEM ON THE OMEGA-3 AND OMEGA-6 FATTY ACID PROFILES OF MILK
- SHEEP SCAB: UPDATE AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Advisory Service

Number of business who have received support through the Livestock Categories of the Advisory Service during this period:



13 individuals received one-to-one support through the Livestock Categories of the Advisory Service during this period.



34 groups received support through the Livestock Categories of the Advisory Service during this period.

Discussion Groups



Brecon 2 Discussion Group

The meeting was an on-farm interactive session that aimed to see first-hand how good grassland management and lameness control can lead to a more profitable and productive livestock business. During the on-farm visit, Flockhealth and Marc Jones spoke to discussion group members about grassland management and sheep lameness – two very topical themes for this time of year.

Topics covered included:

- Management of grass pre- and post-lambing
- Maximising stocking rate and the use of rotational grazing
- Maintaining grass digestibility for ewes and lambs in late lactation
- Finishing lambs at grass
- Using well-tested Plan Prevent Protect Principles to avoid the need to treat clinical cases of lameness
- Applying the Five Point Lameness Plan to specific flock situations, to enable farmers to make realistic progress in tackling lameness in their flock
- Discussing and sharing individual experiences of lameness, including its causes, types, prevention and cure.

For many businesses, lameness is a real problem, and can be extremely costly if not controlled. Many of the discussion group have adopted a 'no-trim' approach to lameness management, and as a result are seeing the benefits. This change has come from being a member of the discussion group, and having the knowledge and confidence to change practices to benefit flock health.

Training



There were claims for **228** courses in the period, **82** of which were for livestock related courses. Some of these courses are shown in the table below.

Courses delivered included:	Number of individuals trained during this period:
Lambing Techniques	13
Safe Use of Sheep Dip	13
DIY AI	12
Safe Use of Vet & Med	11
Poultry Welfare	6

E-learning

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

CALF HOUSING



EWE NUTRITION



BEEF HERD FERTILITY



ICEBERG DISEASES IN SHEEP (MV) AND (CLA)



Click [here](#) to visit the website.



Management Exchange

Tom Jones

HCC scholar, Tesco Future Farmer, NFU Next Generation board member and former Farmers Weekly focus farmer Tom Jones wants to create a sustainable future for his young family. The son of an upland sheep and suckler beef farm, Tom's key focus for his exchange visits is on the efficient production of red meat on a low-cost forage-based system that improves the soil, maintains water quality and enhances the environment. He wants to improve suckler cow profitability through having a better understanding of factors that affect this, including genetics, recording/selection systems and grazing management. "Our goals are to improve the maternal efficiency of the suckler herd to improve both performance and profitability and longer term, to shift back to native breed cattle."

Charlotte Wilson

Lottie is a first-year agriculture student at Nottingham University. Having grown up at her family's 650-acre dairy farm near Haverfordwest, and through a year working in the industry during her foundation studies at Hartpury College, she has plenty of hands-on experience. Her family have a 300-head Holstein Friesian all-year-round calving herd, and operate a semi-intensive system, grazed around six months of the year. "Poor foot health is a major contributor to cattle performance, which can lead to reduced fertility, yield and longevity. By shadowing some of the industry's leading academics in this field, I aim to learn more about issues, including digital dermatitis, antibiotic use, and management techniques to improve lameness rates."

Jamie McCoy

Agriculture graduate Jamie and her partner purchased a mixed family-owned farm in Ceredigion in 2011. Predominantly a 200 strong block calving dairy enterprise, this entrepreneurial couple have set up other diversified enterprises despite Jamie having a full-time job within the industry. They pasteurize milk sold through vending machines; have 250 commercial ewes; a PYO pumpkin enterprise, a successful Airbnb venture and a forestry scale wood-chipper supplying biomass. Jamie is determined to improve profitability of the business, while improving its environmental and community legacy. "We need to add value to milk, meat, vegetables, fibre such as wood and wool and tourism opportunities so I aim to learn more about short supply chains which operate from the farm gate, to keep ahead of the European curve and meet the ever-changing needs of farmer and consumer."

Animal Health & Welfare Workshops



29 WORKSHOPS

held with



344 ATTENDEES

Examples of workshops held:

Flock Fertility Management



Maximising Suckler Cow Productivity



Parasite Control in Cattle



Antibiotic Resistance



Improving Post-Weaning Lamb Performance



Rearing Healthy Calves and Maximising Profit



Sheep Parasite Control Part 1 – Roundworms & Blowfly



www.gov.wales/farmingconnect