RED MEAT DASHBOARD
May 2020 – August 2020

% of all activity in this quarter relevant to the red meat sector

83%

Demonstration Network

Rhiaedog: Improving efficiency from grass

A grazing trial was conducted during spring 2020 at Rhiaedog that focused on the benefits of using standard versus protected urea. Protected and standard urea was applied to separate grass plots at a rate of 35kg per acre, therefore supplying 32 units of nitrogen per acre (40kgN/ha). The outcome of this trial concluded that using protected urea this spring led to an estimated 30% increase in grass growth (2.1000kgDM/ha from standard urea versus 2.8000kgDM/ha from protected urea).

Calves have been performing well off grass, with average daily liveweight gain (DLWG) at the end of August at 1.2kg for the older calves, and 0.8-0.9kg for the younger calves which are approximately 7-8 months of age.

Glanmynys: Focusing on sheep health and performance

Following a successful lambing, lambs were weaned at an average weight of 27kg at 12 weeks of age. On average, ewe body condition score post weaning was at 2, the same score recorded pre-lambing. Although animals were vaccinated against orf, it has still been an issue within the 2020 lamb crop. Lambs were also vaccinated against clostridial diseases with Bravoxin, however losses due to pneumonia are still occurring. During weaning, 105 ewes were selected for culling due to age, mastitis or prolapse mainly. Smart Shot was given to the lambs in the spring and results in August show that they all have satisfactory trace element levels with vitamin B12 in particular improved since the Smart Shot was given.

A post-weaning/ pre-tupping investigation involving blood sampling ewes for trace elements was performed during August. Ewes were blood sampled to monitor copper, selenium, cobalt and zinc levels. Results showed that no copper supplementation was required, however supplementation with selenium in bolus form would be beneficial if administered pre-tupping. The addition of cobalt and zinc could also be beneficial however the difference is likely to be marginal.

Bryn: Exploring beef enterprise performance

The main aim of the project at Bryn demonstration site is to determine the performance of the beef enterprise, focusing on the cost effectiveness of selling stores versus finishing cattle as bull beef. At Bryn, bulls received 1.2t/head of feed compared to the industry target of 1.7t/head. This resulted in an average liveweight at slaughter of 620kg and an average carcass weight of 344kg, with a killing-out percentage of 55%. 93% of the carcasses met abattoir specifications. The project also discovered that bulls could be sold 21 days earlier than stores, resulting in a feed cost saving at housing of £1.50/head/day.

The project concluded that finishing bull calves as bull beef is a more cost effective option at Bryn. Compared to the £13,980 these animals would have totalled by selling them as store cattle, with the value of straw sold and feed consumed accounted for; the business captured an additional £1,600 by rearing them as bulls.

Of the 75 calves born at Bryn in spring 2020, 34 are bulls. They will shortly be introduced to a ration utilising homegrown grain. The financial worth of this additional grain to sell is £620, however, liveweight gain by utilising this grain is worth approximately £1,998.

Animal Health & Welfare Workshops

Workshops held:

5 WORKSHOPS held with

41 ATTENDEES

Antibiotic Resistance

Understanding Johne’s Disease
Discussion Groups

Number of Red Meat Discussion Groups: 33

Case Study
Severn Valley Sheep Discussion Group
This digital meeting discussed the role of trace elements/minerals in a viable lamb production unit with Fiona Lovatt from Flock Health. 75% of the group agreed that there is confusion about which (if any) minerals to give lambs.

Points of discussion included:
- Management
- Forage
- Energy
- Protein
- Water
- Soil
- Disease
- The environment
- Drenches/boluses/injectables
- Water

Fiona explained that there is a relationship between many different minerals and showed the mineral antagonist wheel. Care must be taken when supplementing one mineral that it does not negatively affect uptake or absorption of another mineral.

71% of the group members said they would be interested in doing a mineral audit, which will help identify mineral levels on farms and provide the business with knowledge of their farm’s status and whether they have deficiencies they need to correct.

Training
During this period, 100 instances of face to face training were delivered to the Red Meat sector. The chart below shows the breakdown of individuals trained by category during this period.

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

Mentoring Programme
19 NEW RED MEAT FARMERS ACCESSING THE MENTORING PROGRAMME
433 RED MEAT FARMERS currently being mentored
83% OF ALL MENTEES ARE RED MEAT FARMERS
8 OF THESE ARE PIG FARMERS

New mentees sought advice on various topics including:
- Sustainable land management
- Benchmarking