

THE MAGAZINE FOR FARMING & FORESTRY IN WALES

FARMING connect



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Demonstration Sites

Improving home grown
feed value from clovers

Joint Venture

Venture programme notches
up a new success story



ISSUE 29 - September/October 2020 | www.gov.wales/farmingconnect



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Animal Health Clinic

Sampling, testing and one-to-one advice from local vets is available for Welsh farm businesses registered with Farming Connect. **Suggested list of testing and advice available:**

Blood testing (trace elements, metabolic profiling, Johnes)

FEC Ram or bull fertility

Leptospirosis

IBR

GENETIC DISORDERS / SCREENING

Ecto parasites (Scab)

Bacteriology – culture and sensitivity, lameness, postmortem
Any animal health related issues

All businesses **MUST** be registered with Farming Connect.

Farmers and vets must confirm their interest with Farming Connect before any sampling/testing takes place. Limited funding available.

Testing must take place within 30 days of issue date.

Maximum of one clinic per registered business.

Funding will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

For further details, contact **Helen Lewis - 01970 631 425**
or email helen.lewis@menterabusnes.co.uk



www.gov.wales/farmingconnect

Cefngwilyg Fawr Demonstration Site

Demonstration Site: Cefngwilyg Fawr, The Gorn, Llanidloes, Powys

Technical Officer: Elan Davies

Project Title: Improving home grown feed value from clovers

Project Introduction:

The main aim of the project is to improve the quality of homegrown feed by introducing white and red clover into the grazing and cutting swards. By introducing clover into existing leys, there is potential to decrease the reliance on artificial fertilisers by maximising the clovers' nitrogen fixing potential. This project also aims to assess the impact of higher quality forage on lamb finishing weights and days to slaughter.

Clovers (white and red) are a good source of protein in ruminant diets, both when grazed or silaged. Clover will also fix nitrogen (N) levels, therefore, less artificial nitrogen fertiliser is required for grass growth. Clover-rich swards fit well into forage rotations and benefit soil fertility and structure. Including clover into swards fit well with sustainable farming as methane emissions from livestock reduces as forage quality improves.

Project Objectives:

- Reduce purchased concentrates by improving forage quality.
- Reduce artificial fertiliser use by capitalising on N fixation from clover.
- Improve finishing weights of lambs with improved grazing options.
- Reduce days to slaughter of lambs with improved grazing options.

Key Performance Indicators set:

1. Reduce fertiliser applications for each silage crop by 40kgN/ha
2. To increase clover content in the reseeded fields from <5% to >20%
3. To reduce the amount of purchased concentrates by 10% (i.e. increase crude protein (CP) of forage on the reseeded fields (5ha) from 12% to 20% because of clover [and yields from 5tDM to 10tDM] – that would equate to an additional 1,400kgCP – being the equivalent of about 3t of hipo soya or £1,000 worth).
4. To increase the percentage of lambs finished by 1 September by 10%.

For more information on the development of this project, and for regular updates, please visit the Farming Connect website.



Milk contract key consideration in genomic bull selection for dairy farms

Introducing superior genetics into a dairy herd can significantly improve profitability - the difference between good and bad genetics in spring calving systems is as much as £186/cow/year.

At Mountjoy, a Farming Connect demonstration site, the spring-calving herd, which has a big proportion of heifers, currently produces an average of 496kg milk solids (MS)/cow/year.

By embarking on a project with Farming Connect to improve herd genomics, the Hannah family hope to increase this to 520kg.

Doing so could increase income from milk by over £24,000 a year, farmers were told during a live digital broadcast from the farm at Treffgame, near Haverfordwest.

"The efficiency target for us would be increasing MS per kg live weight from grazed grass and silage," said William Hannah.

Genomic testing has been available in the UK since 2012 with evaluations of pure Holstein, Friesian, Ayrshire, Jersey and Guernsey available.

Fem Pearston, animal genetics manager at AHDB Dairy, a speaker at the Demo Farm Live event from Mountjoy, said the biggest gain from genomics is having that additional information in early life, allowing the farmer to have more confidence in deciding which youngstock to be bred to dairy, beef or sell.

Ms Pearston talked through the process of genomic testing, from taking the tissue samples on farm to receiving the genomic proofs from AHDB.

Increased reliability from genomic testing continues through first and second lactation, she explained.

This means that a genomically-tested cow will have a higher reliability - resulting in more stability in her proof - than an untested herd mate until her third lactation.

"Once you have your genomic results, making your breeding decisions shouldn't change from how you would do this based on parent average or production-based proofs," she said.

Ms Pearston advised farmers to use the tools available from AHDB when preparing to purchase semen, focusing specifically on key features in the Herd Genetic Report, available to dairy farmers who are fully milk recording.

This report will clearly show strengths and weaknesses within a herd alongside the economic index for a herd.

£PLI, the Profitable Lifetime Index, is for all-year-round calving herds, £SCI is the Spring Calving Index for spring block-calving herds, and £ACI is the Autumn Calving Index for autumn block-calving herds.

"The benchmarking table within the report gives a quick overview of the genetic strengths and weaknesses of the herd," she said.

Ms Pearston recommended that farmers use this information when selecting animals from the individual reports - Youngstock and Milking Herd reports - to address weaknesses in the herd while maintaining the existing strengths.

Bulls should be selected in the same way, she added.

"All bulls available for purchase in the UK can be filtered on traits of interest using AHDB's available bull reports," she said.

Milk contract and production system should also be a key consideration when selecting bulls.

At Mountjoy, the contract is milk solids-based therefore this is one of the traits being targeted in the genomics project.

"Our aim is to have more efficient cows that produce more milk solids off grazed grass," said Mr Hannah.

He is screening the genomics of his heifer calves to select the best replacements for the

milking herd - 95 R2 heifers have been tested and heifer calves born this year have been tag and tested.

Simon Pitt, Dairy Technical Officer at Farming Connect, who is overseeing the project, said genomic data had traditionally worked better in high yielding all-year round calving herds because there was significantly more data to develop a large reference population.

However, as more spring calvers record, it will increase the data available on the daughters of grazing-type bulls, he said.



Figure 1. Cows grazing at Mountjoy



The Farming Connect Knowledge Exchange Hub

The Farming Connect Knowledge Exchange Hub (KE Hub) is based at IBERS, Aberystwyth University. Our colleagues there are playing an important role in providing farmers with the latest information from scientific research.



Introducing Dr Cate Williams:

Dr Cate Williams is a lecturer for IBERS at Aberystwyth University and is also part of the Farming Connect Knowledge Exchange Hub. Cate has a background in ruminant gut microbiology, using the latest genetic techniques to study the rumen microbiome and evaluate targets for manipulation that could improve animal productivity or efficiency. Cate has written about a variety of livestock-based topics, from dairy cow fertility to pig nutrition, with a particular interest in genetics and the role that it may play in development of sustainable livestock production.

COMPOSTING WOOL by Dr Cate Williams

WOOL COMPOST

Since the introduction of synthetic fabrics, the market for wool has been in steady decline, but in light of increasing environmental concern, wool may be adapted to other niches as a sustainable, renewable and environmentally friendly material.

In compost

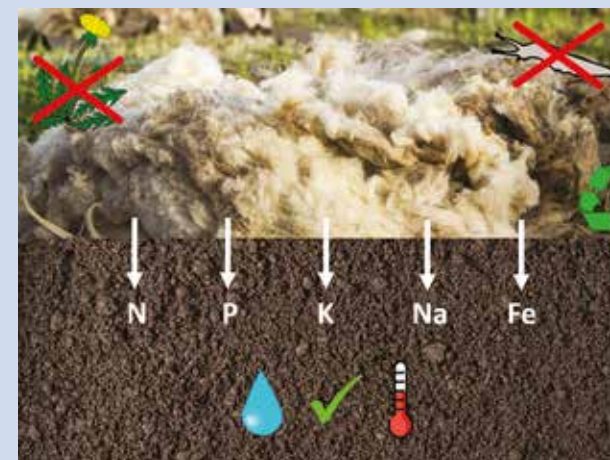
Composting with wool offers a more sustainable alternative to peat, offering similar water holding capacity and a range of essential nutrients. As wool decomposes it acts as a source of slow release nitrogen (10-11%), along with other key trace elements such as potassium, phosphorus and iron. This makes daggings ideal for composting due to the extra nitrogen in the dirt and faeces. Suint is a certain type of grease found in wool which is rich in potassium and acts as a natural, slow release source for plants.

In mulches

Wool has many uses when used as a mulch or in a mat, used above ground, wool regulates soil temperatures, drastically reduces weed growth and predation by slugs and snails. Used below plants, wool helps to reduce water and nutrient run off thanks to its absorbent qualities and the presence of lanolin.

In insulation

Wool has long been used as an effective noise and thermal insulator, but with increasing interest in eco houses and the use of green materials, could see a surge in popularity. In noise insulation wool outperformed mineral wool and coarse, low quality wool was found to be just as effective in thermal insulation as finer fleeces.



With growing concerns over climate change and the need to live sustainably, wool has the potential to make a comeback – as an effective and environmentally friendly compost or as a renewable building material. The next steps will be to investigate optimum conditions for composting and scaling up the process to help restore the value of sheep's wool.

ROUNDWORMS IN SHEEP UPDATE

Reducing reliance on anthelmintics for ewes around lambing through more targeted treatments

Background

Worming all ewes around the time of lambing increases the likelihood of developing anthelmintic resistance (AR) issues within your flock. To mitigate this concern SCOPS has recommended that at least 1 in 10 of the fittest ewes are left untreated.

As the incidence of anthelmintic resistance (AR) increases across UK sheep farms there is a need to further reduce the number treated, but we need evidence based advice on how to target those ewes that are most likely to produce the highest levels of contamination.

Project Objectives

We know that not all ewes produce the same amount of contamination. Faecal Egg Counts (FECs) vary between ewes around lambing and factors involved includes body condition (BCS), nutrition, age and litter size, together with a genetic element linked to the strength of the ewe's immune response. The aim of this project is to engage in detailed monitoring in commercial flocks to see if we can identify those ewes producing high levels of contamination and therefore minimise the proportion treated around lambing without compromising lamb performance. The objective is to provide practical guidelines for other producers to adopt.



Figure 1. Collecting samples

This project, which runs from early 2020 to mid 2022 involves a group of 6 farmers across Wales, including those that keep upland, organic and lowland flocks. Since it is accepted that ewe nutrition and BCS have an impact on the peri-parturient rise (PPR) in egg output by ewes, the group wanted to investigate this further to see if they can minimise the number of ewes treated and levels of contamination on pasture by identifying and targeting those ewes whose immune response is most likely to wane around lambing. The operational group also includes Zoetis Animal Health with Techion, Biobest and APHA involved in supplying the testing, together with FECPAKs on each farm for routine monitoring.

Methodology

In this first year, the farms have monitored a group of twin bearing ewes from about 6 weeks before lambing until 8 weeks after lambing. The group are sampled for FEC on a weekly basis to provide an overall picture of the peri-parturient rise in terms of magnitude, timing and duration. Within those groups they have also identified 10 'sentinel' ewes on each farm and these have had FEC samples and saliva swabs taken on five occasions; before, during and after lambing. The saliva swabs are analysed for an antibody (IgA) which is an indication of how strong the ewe's immune system is.

Results to date

The project has only been running a short time, but data collected so far highlights that there is significant variation both between farms in terms of the extent, timing and duration of the peri-parturient rise. There is also confirmation of large variations between individual 'sentinel' ewes within farms. Currently we are looking at the trends in FEC, BCS and antibodies in saliva. The variations in the early results indicate that there is huge scope to minimise the number of ewes treated on these farms provided we can identify them in a practical and repeatable way.

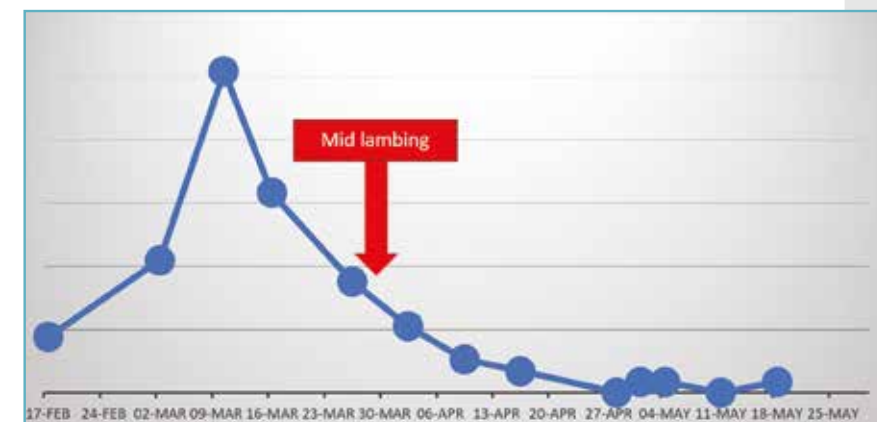


Figure 2: FEC counts from one of the project farms for the monitored mob of ewes scanned with twins. Only ewes in BCS <3 were drenched around the time of lambing.

The full project update is available on the Farming Connect website.

www.gov.wales/farmingconnect

Hendre Ifan Goch Demonstration Site

Demonstration Site: Hendre Ifan Goch, Glynogwr, Bridgend

Technical Officer: Elan Davies

Project Title: Improving soil and livestock management to improve soil carbon capture, and reduce the farm's carbon footprint

Project Introduction:

The UK government has pledged to reduce national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050, with Welsh Government proposing a reduction of 95% GHG emissions within the same period.

The main aim of this project is to first of all identify the current levels of soil organic matter, soil organic carbon and active soil carbon that's present in the soils (on a t/ha basis) at Hendre Ifan Goch. Depending on initial results, the aim is then to see if it is possible to build soil carbon levels by measurement and management.

During the project, a whole farm carbon audit will be completed for the demonstration site using a carbon footprint calculator. Ultimately, this will offer an absolute carbon balance figure for the farm. This exercise will also identify key areas where improvements could be made within farming practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, therefore, lowering their carbon footprint with the aim of becoming carbon neutral.

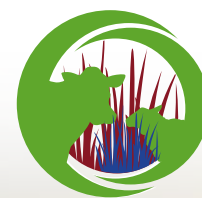
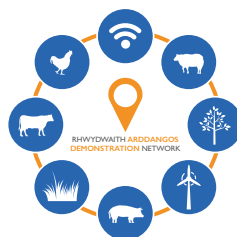
Project Objectives:

- Identify current levels of soil organic matter, soil organic carbon and active soil carbon at Hendre Ifan Goch.
- Aim to build soil carbon levels by various measurement and management methods.
- Complete a whole farm carbon audit to calculate an absolute carbon balance figure.
- Identify key areas within the farm where emissions can be reduced.

Key Performance Indicators set:

1. Increase soil organic matter and soil carbon levels by 1% annually based on the baseline measurement
2. Improve livestock production and efficiency, improving lamb growth rates by 50g/day during a 12-week period
3. Reduce the carbon footprint per kilo of lamb produced annually by 15% based on the baseline measurement.

For more information on the development of this project, and for regular updates, please visit the Farming Connect website.



RHAGORI AR BORI
PROSPER FROM PASTURE

*Improving the future of
pasture-based livestock systems*

PROSPER FROM PASTURE is a short programme with three levels that will develop your knowledge and confidence in grassland management. You will need to determine what level best suits you.

ENTRY

Being part of the **ENTRY** level will provide you with:

- Background knowledge and theory in pasture management and livestock systems
- Confidence and knowledge to improve your business
- A base level of knowledge with calculations and "Rules of Thumb"

Each Entry level participant will attend four compulsory meetings.

INTERMEDIATE

Being part of the **INTERMEDIATE** level will provide you with:

- Practical demonstration of different grassland management techniques
- Tips on establishing the best grass species and varieties for intensive rotational grazing
- Greater understanding of soil management for maximising grass growth
- Examples of how to implement key practical and infrastructure elements into your grazing system

Each Master Class will include a minimum of two days meeting in a central location (subject to change in relation to Covid-19).

ADVANCED

Being part of the **ADVANCED** level will provide you with:

- Grazing platform design - farm mapping, paddock layout, water systems
- Grazing management and feed budgeting
- Pasture management support
- Enhance precision by introducing farm business/grazing management tools
- A platform to progress existing knowledge and share ideas to build confidence in grassland management

Each Advanced level participant will attend four compulsory meetings.

Each participant will need to confirm that their business has a valid (max 5 years old) Nutrient Management Plan (NMP). Funding is available for a NMP, please contact your local Farming Connect development officer for further information. Contact details can be found on our website on www.gov.wales/farmingconnect.

The application window will be open between **26 October 2020 - 26 November 2020**. Further information on how to be part of Prosper from Pasture will be on our website soon.



Dairy farmer weighs up cost benefits of robot milking in a large-scale herd

A Farming Connect initiative is helping a young Welsh farmer inform decision making on upgrading milking facilities at his family's dairy farm.

Ieuan Evans lives at Rhiwarthen Isaf, Capel Bangor, where he and his family farm 1,100 acres.

They milk 800 cows across two units with half the herd milked in a 44-point rotary parlour and the others in a 20/40 herringbone.

As they target herd expansion, they are outgrowing these facilities.

Ieuan believes robotic milking could be an option and applied for the Farming Connect Management Exchange Programme to explore this technology further to inform his own decision making and that of other dairy farmers contemplating upgrading their own milking facilities.

"With the development of robotic milking making a massive breakthrough in the last 10 years, there is no better time to think about automating/semi-automating our systems such as milking and feeding to reduce our day to day workload significantly," he says.

"Farming is seen as a traditional and dated industry but we need to harness technology to help us produce food in a manner that satisfies today's modern trends with consumers in a sustainable manner."

As his family is also seeking to increase slurry storage capacity, Ieuan was also keen to learn from the experiences of the farms he visited on his Management Exchange.

"We have already taken steps to minimise the effect of our slurry on the environment by investing in an umbilical slurry system with a disk injector, but more can be done," says Ieuan.

"We are looking to increase our slurry storage capacity so that slurry is only applied when it would be of most nutritional benefit to the fields and would be less susceptible to leaching."

Ieuan's study took him to the Agri-Epi South West Dairy Development Centre in Somerset and to Worthy Farm, Glastonbury, where the Eavis family has invested more than £2 million in a robotic rotary milking parlour.

There was also a visit to Bauernland AG in west Germany, a dairy farm with the latest version of the DeLaval AMR robotic rotary milking parlour, and to Dendoldrum Farm in Inverbervie, Scotland, where the high yielding herd is milked in seven Lely Astronaut stall milking robots.

"Seeing is believing - some of the technologies I saw during my visits were initially thought of as complex and things of the future, but upon closer study it can be broken down to a simpler system with different parts undertaking different tasks," says Ieuan.



Yet the cost of installing robots in a large-scale dairy system is "massive", he concludes, and investment is a decision that should not be taken lightly.

But he believes costs will reduce and the throughput and functions of robotic milking will increase to make them appealing to more farmers.

Ieuan's study taught him that there can never be too much data in dairying.

"The increased use of technology on dairy farms allows more and more parameters to be measured and masses of data recorded like never before," he says.

"If the data is analysed correctly by the farmer/herdsman it could be used as an extremely powerful tool that could even detect problems before they occur."

Ieuan reckons there is great value in visiting farms to see what others are doing.

"All of the little techniques, systems and methods that other farms use on a daily basis could be passed on and make a difference to the way your farm is run, it could save you a few seconds, minutes or pounds every day. They say knowledge is power and farm visits are an excellent way to transfer knowledge," he says.

Figure 1. Ieuan Evans, Rhiwarthen Isaf



CEFNOGI MENTRAU AR Y CYD
SUPPORTING JOINT VENTURES

Farming Connect's Venture programme notches up a new success story

A better work life balance, more stock but less pressure and the prospect of exciting new opportunities in the years ahead! Thanks to a new joint venture supported by Farming Connect's Venture programme, the future looks bright for two farming families from the Conwy valley. They have joined two farming businesses to run as a single state of the art dairy business.

Young farmer Emyr Owen (30) from Bodrach, near Pandy Tudur, who farms in partnership with his parents on a 185 acre former beef and sheep farm and his next door neighbour Gwydion Jones (38) whose family formerly farmed a herd of 150 dairy cattle at the neighbouring 95 acre Ty'n Ffynnon farm, have combined forces in a new joint venture business partnership, which includes Emyr's older brother Dylan and Gwydion's wife Elen.

Emyr and Gwydion are Aberystwyth university agriculture graduates who are progressive, entrepreneurial and focused. They were equally determined to expand their original family businesses in order to maximise the potential to produce milk off grass whilst also enabling their respective parents to step back from the day to day pressures of farming in the uplands.

Emyr has a contract agreement to manage a local farm and realised he could not farm both places without continued support from his parents who hoped to take a step back.

Gwydion was also involved in other joint ventures away from Ty'n Ffynnon and knew growing his family dairy business made sound commercial sense.

"Although the two farms were being run very efficiently, both families recognised we had taken them as far as we could and agreed it was essential to plan ahead for the longer-term sustainability of both," says Emyr.

At the end of 2018, they contacted their local Venture officer, Gwydion Owen, who helped support the families throughout the joint venture process. Thanks to receiving funded business and legal support through Venture, the two businesses were able to set up a new limited company, a trading arm, Llaeth Bod-Ffynnon Cyf.

Armed with a business plan provided by approved Farming Connect consultant, Geraint Jones of Kite Consulting, the two families formally joined forces, were able to approach the bank and receive the loan needed to create their new dairy



Big smiles from the Conwy valley dairy farmers whose new joint venture business was established with support from Farming Connect. From left to right, business partners Dylan Owen, his brother Emyr and Gwydion Jones, who all posed for this photo before the Covid-19 social distancing rules!

Photo credit: Farmers Guardian

infrastructure and increase stock numbers. This was quickly followed by a legal agreement drawn up by Elin Owen of Agri Advisor Legal LLP.

Emyr's family sold all their beef and sheep in order to purchase dairy heifers and focus entirely on the new dairy enterprise. For Gwydion and his family, this was an opportunity to increase the size of their original spring calving New Zealand herd from 150 through the purchase of 300 bought-in dairy heifers which are now owned equally by both families.

A new rotary milking parlour and suitable tracks were built at the yard at Bodrach which was centrally located between the two farms with a new water supply

installed on both farms. The new milking infrastructure has the capacity to milk 450 cows twice daily, producing up to 5,000L of milk annually, sold on contract to Arla.

Gwydion has been able to bring in additional members of staff, freeing up more of his time and improving his work life balance. He says the support from the Venture programme was invaluable.

"The combination of having a sound business plan and legal agreement together with Emyr and I having a clear vision of what we want to achieve, mutual respect for each other and the determination to safeguard the future of our family farms, has given us a great basis for moving forward."

Face-to-face training is back

Farming Connect's face-to-face training is underway again. Due to the restrictions of Covid-19, although it's not quite 'training as usual' as yet for Farming Connect, face-to-face training courses are now available both indoors and externally. Where feasible, a range of methods will be incorporated into the usual training delivery, in order to minimise face-to-face contact.

This means that provided the Welsh Government's current Covid-19 regulations are adhered to, all face-to-face training is now available. Training providers will be required to clearly communicate expected behaviours to learners including the need to keep records for track and trace; social distancing requirements; hygiene requirements such as regular and thorough hand washing; promotion of the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach; what to do if they feel unwell; and what to do if they have concerns. Welsh Government has warned that its current guidance is subject to change at any time should there be a resurgence of the pandemic.

Kevin Thomas, director of Lantra Wales welcomed the recommencement of all face-to-face training.

"As everyone plans for the future, personal, business and technical skills will be especially beneficial for those who may need to adapt their business model due to the changed market conditions caused by the pandemic and as we plan to exit the EU," said Mr Thomas.

Broadly categorised into Farming Connect's key themes of 'business', 'livestock' and 'land', all training is either fully funded or subsidised by up to 80%.

"There really is something for everyone in virtually every sector of farming and many farm food related areas of work too, so visit our website, contact your local development officer or speak to your chosen training provider and start planning your future now," said Mr Thomas.

For further information about all Farming Connect skills and training and to view an online version of the new 'Step by step' guidance booklet, visit gov.wales/farmingconnectskillsandtraining.

Alternatively, contact your local Farming Connect development officer, the Farming Connect Service Centre or your selected training provider.



Current skills application window OPEN NOW

09:00 Monday 7 September - 17:00 Friday 30 October 2020

Farming Connect has published a new A4 'step by step' booklet which will guide registered individuals through the largely online process of applying for training and e-learning.

This useful booklet gives you all the information you need to complete an online Personal Development Plan (PDP); access BOSS via Sign On Cymru; apply for the training of your choice and it will also encourage you to get your Storfa Sgiliau online professional development record up to speed too.

"At every stage of the online application process, this booklet will show you the screen prompts you need but also tell you who to contact if you still require personal one-to-one support or guidance," said Kevin Thomas, director of Lantra Wales, which together with Menter a Busnes delivers a major part of Farming Connect's training provision.

If you require a hard copy of this booklet, contact the Service Centre or your local development officer or your selected training provider.



Caught out by the pandemic?

Registered individuals who have received approval for face-to-face training but whose courses were postponed due to the pandemic lockdown, should contact their selected training provider as soon as possible to discuss their options.

Those who have not already applied for a funded training course can do so during the current skills application window. If registering for the first time, you will need to contact the **Farming Connect Service Centre** on **08456 000 813** before **17:00 Monday 26 October 2020**.

Along with Farming Connect's recently expanded range of more than 80 fully funded e-learning courses, available to all registered individuals, the range of digital or 'remote' subsidised training has also steadily increased since the pandemic first surfaced. It currently includes courses on food safety, business related training, poultry related training and animal health and welfare topics.

Why this Powys sheep farmer is 'hooked' on e-learning

Third generation sheep farmer Wyn Williams from Llanfair Caereinion knows a lot about sheep farming. Now, thanks to Farming Connect's fully funded online e-learning training modules, he knows considerably more!

Wyn was brought up on the family farm just a few miles from where he lives. Today, at his hill farm, which ranges from 1,100 to 1,300 ft high, he runs 500 predominantly hardy cross-bred speckled breeding ewes and 200 dry ewe lambs.

Wyn has been using any spare time to acquire new knowledge through Farming Connect. He has undertaken e-learning modules on topics ranging from identifying and treating diseases in sheep to managing fluke, lameness, antimicrobial resistance and biosecurity.

Wyn says he had always assumed he had neither the need nor time to get involved in studying, but having missed out on the academic side of agriculture in his younger days, he had concerns that he may not be up to speed with current guidance and best practice.



Figure 1. Llanfair Caereinion hill farmer Wyn Williams, seen here with his local Farming Connect development officer, Owain Pugh, says the lockdown has got him 'hooked' on e-learning.

Persuaded by his local development officer Owain Pugh, Wyn registered for BOSS, the Welsh Government's Business Online Support Service via Sign On Cymru, which is the route to selecting and accessing Farming Connect's range of more than 80 e-learning courses.

"After completing my first e-learning course on seasonal reproduction in ewes in under an hour, which included a short quiz to assess what I'd learned, I was hooked."

Wyn is now steadily working his way through every sheep-related module available through Farming Connect. Once he's completed them all, he plans to move on to online courses on grassland and business management.

"It's such an easy way to acquire more knowledge, pitched at just the right level and you learn at your own pace."

For further information on Farming Connect skills and training, visit gov.wales/farmingconnectskillsandtraining



"Helpful weblinks which signposted me to more information have helped me make better informed choices and decisions."

"I've saved lot of time and money by considering the options for various withdrawal periods of drench. By having the relevant information easily accessible, I am able to move stock on as soon as they are ready".

"Each course contains so much practical advice which I can always relate to issues I deal with on the farm on a day to day basis."



Figure 1. Black Pigs, Forest Coalpit Farm, foraging in their woodland

How can pigs and woodlands be mutually beneficial?

The natural habitat of the pig's ancestors was woodland. This means that grazing woodlands is an historical system.

Pigs are more likely to be farmed intensively indoor these days, but keeping pigs in woodlands, with the correct conditions and management, can be beneficial for both the pigs and the woodland. It is important to note the environmental benefits of using pigs as a management tool, offering an alternative to heavy machinery and chemicals.

By foraging and eating the ground cover, pigs can act as natural predators of invasive species. By reducing undergrowth and disturbing the soil they create a seedbed.

Their natural foraging behaviour means they bury seeds and eat them, creating a better opportunity for those seeds to survive and germinate compared to those that stay on the surface. As a result this is a very effective method of promoting natural regeneration that will contribute to improving the biodiversity of the woodland and farm.

Looking at the other side of the coin, the trees are also very beneficial for the pigs by offering an efficient level of shelter. Pigs are also omnivores, meaning that most of them live on a varied diet of roots, nuts, fruits, and the meat of small creatures such as snakes, that are regularly found in woodlands.

It is imperative that health and welfare levels are maintained and therefore it is important to ensure that sufficient levels of water and food (from dependable sources) are provided for the pigs. If not, there is a risk that they will raise roots and destroy regenerating trees and work against the original objective of managing the woodland sustainably.

Kyle Holford who uses the farm woodland to manage and breed their Black Pigs on Forest Coalpit Farm, says that their pigs "forage for food such as acorns and nuts without any heat stress issues as a result of the shelter provided by the trees".

VIRTUAL >>>>>>

INNOVATION AND DIVERSIFICATION

19.10.2020 - 23.10.2020

Add value to your business, invest in your future, be part of the success story

Are you looking to diversify your business?

Would you like to explore how to improve business sustainability and profitability through innovation and technology?

Following the success of Innovation and Diversification Wales last year we are going virtual and will provide you with support, advice and guidance to improve your businesses and allow you to explore new ideas to improve profitability and sustainability.

Timetable and further details will follow soon on our website.



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Weekly Webinars

Join us and industry experts for a wide range of topical webinars aimed at providing useful support and information to you during this uncertain time. To join a webinar visit our events page on our website.



When	Topic	Speaker
21/09/20 20:00	Get on the farming ladder Venture Virtual Week <i>The webinar will be held on Facebook Live through the medium of English.</i>	Peredur Owen, Rhys Williams, Emyr Owen, farmers from different joint ventures
24/09/20 20:00	Venture to the next step Venture Virtual Week <i>Registering for this webinar is essential. Some of the webinar will be through the medium of Welsh and translation facilities will be available.</i>	Rhodri Jones, Agri Advisor and Matthew Jackson, joint venture farmer
28/09/20 15:30	Search Engine Optimisation	Eddy Webb, Insynch
29/09/20 14:00	Talking Back (constructively!) <i>Learn techniques to support you through challenging conversations.</i>	Alice Lampard, Performance and Development Coach
01/10/20 20:00	Time to talk about woodland soils?	Geraint Jones, Farming Connect
05/10/20 18:00	Smart Agriculture and Internet of Things (IOT)	Glass Data
08/10/20 20:00	Pig nutrition and alternative feeds	Dafydd Owen, Farming Connect
12/10/20 19:00	What can Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) tools and techniques offer livestock farmers?	Manod Williams, IBERS, Aberystwyth
19/10/2020 - 23/10/2020	Innovation and Diversification VIRTUAL >>>>>>	
26/10/20 15:30	Google Analytics	Eddy Webb, Insynch
29/10/20 19:00	Woodland management to promote biodiversity and wildlife	Geraint Jones, Farming Connect
02/11/20 15:30	E-mail Marketing	Eddy Webb, Insynch
16/11/20 18:00	Safe and secure data storage in the cloud	Justin Thomas, SIARP
23/11/20 18:00	Using the EIDCymru website	Jonathan Pryce, EID Cymru