



DEMONSTRATION
NETWORK

INNOVIS

Get the latest updates from our Innovation Sites. In this issue – Innovis, one of the leading suppliers of sheep breeding technologies to the UK farming industry.

SOIL SAMPLING

Measures to increase grass production and make savings on bought feeds and fertiliser.





INTRODUCTION



WELCOME to the first issue of Farming Connect's new technical publication for farmers and foresters in Wales.

Published bi-monthly, it will include easy to digest facts and figures about a range of technical matters, along with the latest information and research from our new Knowledge Exchange Hub, which aims to enhance the links between researchers and the farm and forestry sectors.

It will also include updates and results from trials undertaken on Demonstration Sites across Wales, aiming to test and prove new innovation and technology in a practical and commercial setting.

We hope that our FC technical publication will provide you with a quick overview on technical aspects of the project, allowing you to access the latest information to benefit your business.

Prof. E. Wynne Jones

Chair of the Farming Connect Strategic Advisory Board.

Farming Connect

- a new, enhanced programme of support for farmers and foresters in Wales.

Register for the new programme today!

08456 000 813

www.gov.wales/farmingconnect

INNOVIS

Later Lambing

FARMERS and foresters in Wales can now improve their businesses by accessing the latest cutting edge research and development through Farming Connect's new Innovation Sites.

Based at universities, colleges and research facilities across Wales, the eight Innovation Sites will host projects and trials using the very latest innovations and technologies within agriculture and forestry, which can then be implemented on Welsh farms.



One of the Innovation Sites is Innovis in Aberystwyth. Innovis has extensive experience in accessing and utilising the latest research and technology in sheep breeding to maximise flock performance.



From its base at Peithyll, Capel Dewi, Innovis runs the largest performance recorded flock in the UK, recording more than 40 traits in its 1,500 elite nucleus ewes, which are farmed commercially at 1000ft, lambing outdoors. The flock is growing rapidly, with 2,200

breeding ewes recorded in multiplier units in 2014, using multiple ovulation embryo transfer programmes to accelerate the genetics.

Innovis works with hundreds of forward-thinking farmers across the UK to improve genetics and ultimately increase production. By working as an Innovation Site, Innovis hopes to help the industry create a blueprint for development in the sheep sector to make businesses more efficient and profitable.

It is a totally different way to breed, keep and market sheep compared to what is being done in the UK at the moment.

Hopefully, we can help the industry in exploring new technologies and demonstrate the difference the latest innovations, genetics and best practice can make to many breeding and commercial sheep farmers.

Dewi Jones,
chief executive of Innovis.



One of the first Innovation Site projects to be hosted at Innovis will study whether there are any benefits to later lambing. The project aims to find out the cost and production implications of lambing in late June or early July, compared to the more conventional springtime season of March and April.

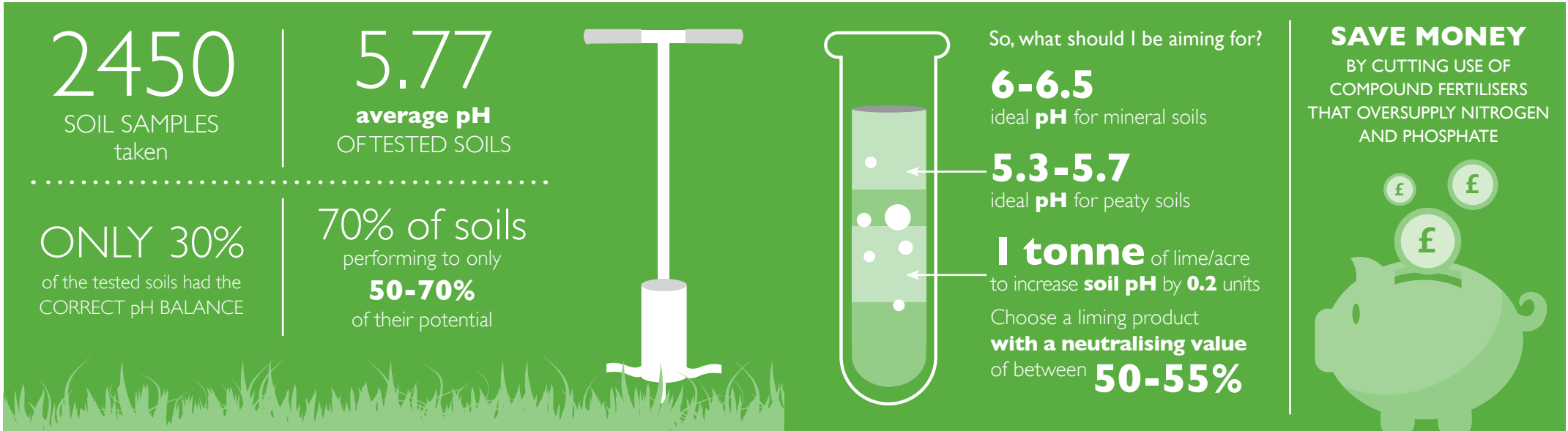


The project carries a substantial risk as later lambing could have a significant effect on lambing percentages and prices, as the lambs will be sold much later than usual. However, there could also be significant benefits to the industry by becoming more competitive and having a more continuous supply of lamb for the market throughout the year.

Regular updates on this project will be available on our website www.gov.wales/farmingconnect

FARMERS in Wales could increase grass production and make significant savings on bought feeds and fertiliser, simply by getting the right balance of nutrients in their soil.

SOIL SAMPLING



Results from 2450 field samples taken from across Wales show that only 57 fell into the target range for four key nutrients, risking lower returns by reduced growth potential. However, nutrient management through improved use of fertilisers and manure can increase forage yields, reduce purchased feeds and save money.

The most important factor is soil pH. To achieve maximum yield and quality from ryegrass and clover swards, the ideal pH is 6-6.5 for mineral soils and 5.3-5.7 for peaty soils. Only 30% of the tested soils had the correct balance, with the rest only achieving between 50-70% of their potential.

Lime raises soil pH levels and increases grassland productivity. Choose a liming product with a neutralising value of between 50-55% for greater effectiveness. Applying one tonne of lime per acre will increase the pH index by 0.2

units, but no more than two tonne/acre should be applied at a time.

Getting the correct pH balance will also have a significant impact on other key elements such as phosphate and potassium (potash).

Phosphate is essential for plant root development and energy use. While 36% of the fields tested hit the target level of index 2, 37% were above, which is unnecessary and uneconomical. Many farms could make significant savings and increase yields by reducing or stopping the use of phosphate fertilisers.

In contrast, potash figures were lower than the required index level. Potash is essential for water regulation and nutrient movement around the plant. It is required in high levels for silage fields, but should be lower on grazing ground to avoid the risk of hypomagnesaemia

(stagers). However, the results showed that grazing fields had higher potash levels than needed and silage fields were not getting enough of it, with the use of compound fertilisers blamed for the nutrient imbalance.

Harvesting silage also takes its toll on the soil, with every tonne of 30% dry matter forage removing 2.1kg of phosphate and 7.2kg of potash. With a tonne of 25% dry matter manure containing 1.9kg phosphate and 7.2kg potash, it is essential to restore nutrients, but over several cuts, manure cannot maintain potash offtake and compound fertilisers can over supply nitrogen and phosphate.

The results showed adequate levels of magnesium, with 46% hitting the target index 2, and 43% in index 3, below the level when soil quality can be affected.

Farmers are advised to sample a quarter of the farm each year in rotation to maintain well-balanced soil.

Under the new Farming Connect Advisory Service, technical grassland and crop management is eligible for 80% funding, up to a maximum of 1500 Euros per instance of advice, to all eligible businesses. Soil and nutrient planning is available, including soils and slurry sampling.

Soils and Grassland clinics are also available to eligible and registered businesses. Your local Development Officer will take five free samples; then collect your results and feedback from a soils and grassland specialist at your local meeting. Contact your local Development Officer to register your interest, or for more information go to our website or contact the **Service Centre** on **08456 000 813**.

MEASURE TO MANAGE

A NEW farm data recording scheme is set to make it easier for farmers to improve their businesses.

The latest figures from the Farm Business Survey shows substantial variation between top and bottom third producers in terms of profit margin.

Farmers have long been encouraged to know the physical and financial performance of their farms, and now, Farming Connect's new 'Measure to Manage' scheme offers an easy system of recording information, which can then be compared to similar enterprises to see what steps could help improve businesses.

While farmers have historically shied away from other benchmarking schemes, because of the time required to input data, it is hoped that the new 'Measure to Manage' system will be more user-friendly. Step-by-step data collection forms will make it easier to record information in bite-sized chunks during the production year. For example, to make it

easier for beef and sheep enterprises, the programme will start in autumn and follow the breeding year, with the dairy programme running from April to the end of March.

Farmers will receive data collection sheets, which they can fill in on paper or ideally electronically throughout the month. The monthly calendar format will enable quick and easy recording of any sales, purchases, and flock or herd activity as and when they happen.

On-farm support will be offered to complete the forms, along with incentives to do so and consultancy to discuss the results.

After an initial meeting concentrating on business performance, benefits of recording and comparing data, a series of meetings will focus on other topics highlighted by the benchmarking exercise, such as livestock productivity, grassland management or diversification options.

For more information visit our website www.gov.wales/farmingconnect

Technical Officers

There will be eight technical officers providing sector specific expertise in the development and implementation of trials for Farming Connect's network of innovation, demonstration and focus sites. Each issue will focus on a different technical officer:

Gethin Prys Davies - Red Meat Technical Officer

Having been raised on a beef and sheep farm in Snowdonia, agriculture has been an integral part of Gethin's life. An active member of the young farmers organisation, Gethin represented Snowdonia at stock judging competitions.

After completing his BSc honours degree in Environmental Science at Bangor University, he secured employment in the agriculture department at the Snowdonia National Park Authority, where he worked closely with landowners within the Park. He is currently studying an MSc degree in Effective and Sustainable Food Production through Aberystwyth University's 'distance learning' programme.

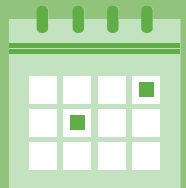
He joined Farming Connect in 2012 as a Knowledge Transfer Facilitator and was recently appointed to the role of Red Meat Technical Officer. He very much looks forward to working with farmers to ensure that Wales continues to play a leading role in the sector, not only within Europe, but on a global scale.

Gethin's expertise includes:

- Grassland management
- Soil and nutrient management
- Farm business review
- Flock management



ON-FARM SUPPORT
WILL BE OFFERED TO
COMPLETE THE FORMS.




Business Plan Workshop:

Advice on planning and preparing tailored business plans (booking is essential).

11 February 2016	Welshpool
12 February 2016	Usk
18 February 2016	Anglesey
19 February 2016	Bala

Ewe Nutrition:

Focussing on meeting the ewe's needs and maximising lamb performance.

9 February 2016 19:30 – 21:30	Ewe Nutrition with Kate Phillips	The Red Lion, Dinas Mawddwy, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9JA
10 February 2016 19:30 – 21:30	Ewe Nutrition with Kate Phillips	Clwyd Gate Restaurant, Mold Rd, Ruthin, Denbighshire LL15 1YF
16 February 2016 19:30 – 21:30	Ewe Nutrition with John Vipond	Llandoverly RFC, Church Bank, Llandoverly, Carmarthenshire SA20 0BA
17 February 2016 19:30 – 21:30	Ewe Nutrition with John Vipond	Elan Valley Hotel, Elan Valley, Rhayader, Powys LD6 5HN
18 February 2016 19:30 – 21:30	Ewe Nutrition with John Vipond	The Eagles, Ancaster Square, Church St, Llanrwst, Conwy LL26 0LG

EID Roadshow: Call in between 10:00 and 16:00 for guidance on changes to EID legislative requirements, and how to harness the potential of EID equipment.

12 February 2016	EID Roadshow	Lampeter Rugby Club, North Rd, Lampeter, Ceredigion SA48 7JA
17 February 2016	EID Roadshow	Carreg Cennen Castle, Trapp, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6UA
19 February 2016	EID Roadshow	Three Salmons, Bridge St, Usk, Monmouthshire NP15 1RY
23 February 2016	EID Roadshow	Grove Golf Club, Porthcawl Bridgend CF33 4RP

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