

THE MAGAZINE FOR FARMING & FORESTRY IN WALES

FARMING connect



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Heifer Synchronizing

Increasing genetic potential and fertility.

The Future of Farming

New technologies which could change the way we farm.



ISSUE 10 - July/August 2017 | www.gov.wales/farmingconnect



ANDREW REES, Moor Farm,
Walwyns Castle, Haverfordwest
Farming Connect Demonstration Site

We are dairy farmers near Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire, keeping 230 Freisian cows on a spring block calving system, aiming to produce 500kg milk solids per cow, with around 1000kg concentrate.

In recent months we've been very busy, we've moved house, we're busy maintaining the focus on careful grazing management and the silage harvest and we're also into the final application stages for the 'Sustainable Production Grant' which we will be utilising to build new milking facilities, increase cow accommodation and overhaul our slurry handling. We have also improved the grazing infrastructure taking into account advice from Bertie Troy of Grasstec (Ireland) and have used fast flow ballcocks in our new water troughs. In the recent heatwave we have seen the difference in water availability between the areas of the farm on the old and new system and are pleased we took the decision to invest where we did.

One of our targets set 2 years ago was to complete business succession and develop time efficient systems to work towards a better work/life balance within five years. The recent house move is a step closer to achieving that goal, but whilst we have building projects on the go we can foresee some long days ahead.

Our grass growth can be followed through the Welsh Pasture Project on the Farming Connect website but we are pleased to report an exceptional season. Cows were turned

out on 15th March, nearly 3 weeks later than 2016. Average farm cover at this point was around 2800kg DM/ha vastly more than the same time in the 2016 season (1880kg DM/ha). The compounded impact of a late turnout, greater than normal winter growth and difficult grazing conditions meant we didn't begin second round until 21st April. This knocked production as grass quality had dropped to 10.8ME and 22% protein with heavy covers compared to 12.8ME and 26% protein in the second round last year.

Having cut silage and pre-mowed the majority of the round during June we have good quality regrowth to hopefully hold milk production through the rest of the summer. Early signs are that breeding has gone well with 210 animals out of 300 bred have been scanned to calve in the first 4 weeks next February.

We have hosted a number of groups at the farm recently, including a small discussion group focusing on grazing infrastructure and a Women in Dairying event studying youngstock rearing protocols and key performance indicators. Farming Connect project work in the coming months will focus on building on what we already do in terms of low cost grass production – we would like to look more closely at sustainable soil management and the possibility of reducing fertiliser use without compromising growth.

Feed efficiency and the future of sheep farming

Over the past 50 years a great deal of effort has been applied to the process of improving production levels of the Welsh national flock. Little has been done however to study the variation between individuals in their levels of feed intake and the relationship with animal performance. This is because feed efficiency is a complex trait and hard to measure.

Understanding how much animals are eating when they are grazing is even more difficult and precision feeding strategies have remained largely unexplored in grazing flocks. Efforts made to measure feed conversion efficiency in sheep have therefore been limited because measurements of feed intake are expensive and time consuming. This is set to change thanks to research work being carried out at IBERS, Aberystwyth University.

A project, part-funded by Farming Connect is looking at new techniques for measuring feed intake in sheep. The project aim is to be able to develop a measure which can be used in large numbers of animals at grass. A number of proxy measures have been identified with the objective of being able to be used at grass and at a low enough cost that they can be used in commercial sheep breeding programmes. Furthermore, the technologies developed will be able to help understand the relative efficiency of feed use on different types of grazing and forage.

- Feed efficiency is best described as maximising production (meat, milk, wool) whilst minimising the amount of feed needed to achieve this. Such animals are likely to have a greater digestive ability and are able to utilise more of the energy from feed rather than losing it in faeces
- Such selection will result in maintaining a high production level from less food, and emitting less waste products, reducing the environmental impact of ruminant products.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/posts/feed-efficiency-ruminants-impacts-production-and-environment>



CHOOSING A RAM – the future of the flock

With the main ram buying season fast approaching thoughts will be turning to how the purchase of new animals can complement and improve the profitability of the sheep business. Since rams play a vital role in how the flock performs with one ram easily siring over 500 lambs in their lifetime this is one of the most important decisions of the year.

The ram buying decision therefore needs to take into account a number of criteria including whether the ram is able to get significant numbers of ewes in lamb. This is down to fertility and fitness. Fertility is influenced by a number of factors and the best way to maximise the likelihood of rams being able to successfully serve ewes is down to their management. This includes the period before purchase and continues throughout their time on the farm. Rams should therefore fulfil the following criteria at purchase:

- Free from lameness and brisket sores
- In good condition (*condition score 3.5 to 4*) but not fat
- Not reliant on high levels of concentrate feeding
- Having undergone a physical examination by a vet to ensure optimum testicle size and no damage to the reproductive organs
- Not carrying a particularly full fleece, this is especially relevant for rams used in August and September who could suffer from heat stress

Using rams with objective measures of their performance such as estimated breeding values are an untapped resource for

improving flock profitability on many farms and as well as functional traits, rams should be selected taking any available information into account.

Before introducing any stock on the farm, care must be taken that no new diseases enter the flock at the same time. A number of biosecurity issues can be prevented by some simple quarantine procedures including isolation and proactive treatments: resistant roundworms, footrot, contagious ovine digital dermatitis, scab and Liver Fluke can all be introduced into a flock through the purchase of a single ram. Other diseases such as Maedi Visna (MV) or Caseous Lymphadenitis (CLA) cannot be prevented by treatment but there are testing options and in some cases accreditation schemes. The need for good biosecurity is increasingly important and the most appropriate recommendations for an individual flock are best sought through veterinary advice.



Now is also the time to ensure that rams already present on the farm are fit for the coming season. A 'ram MOT' consists of a physical examination of the reproductive organs and is best carried out by a vet but with some experience rams can be examined without outside support. Veterinary advice is also vital at this time of year to ensure that newly purchased rams do not introduce any disease into the flock.

HEIFER SYNCHRONIZING - increasing genetic potential and fertility

With fertility and genetic gain being key drivers of profitability in suckler beef production, the mating period is a time to reflect on what changes could possibly be made to address these key drivers. This has been the case at our focus site Fferam Gyd, Llanbabo where farmer Mr Llyr Hughes has implemented an oestrus synchronisation programme on a proportion of his commercial suckler cows.

A total of 55 mixed aged suckler cows were presented to the synchronisation programme which were inseminated to a high genetic merit Limousin bull. A further 30 suckler cows were served naturally by one of the farm's stock bulls as a control group. At the start of the programme, the cattle were weighed and conditioned to determine if live weight and condition had an impact on the cows' fertility performance. The average live weight was 692kg and the condition scores averaged 2.8. A strict synchronisation programme was then observed.

DATE	TREATMENT	TIME
Wednesday 24th May	Insert CIDR and 2.5ml Veterelin	Anytime
Wednesday 31st May	Remove CIDR and inject 2ml Prelim	6:00 AM
Friday 2nd June	Inject 2.5ml Veterelin (at time of 1st AI)	PM
Friday 2nd June Saturday 3rd June	AI fixed time AI fixed time	2:00 PM 12 - 2 PM
Monday 10th July	PD	(39-40 days served)

Pregnancy diagnosis results conducted 40 days after the first service have shown that a total of 42 cows (76%) have successfully bred which is above average for this synchronisation programme. As a result calving will be more condensed and result in even batches of calves to sell which would have had a further 21 days growth over the repeat heat calves.

Another area where Mr Hughes feels the program has benefited him is the reduction in labour time. In total it took 2 full time members of staff approximately 12 hours to complete the synchronisation programme. Compare this with observing cattle for a non-synchronised AI programme for 90 minutes per day over an 8 week period totalling 84 hours, it is clear how a fixed time AI programme can be of benefit to farmers who are short on time and possibly skilled labour.



Lameness has been estimated to cost in excess of £180 per case, or 1+ppl in lost milk yield, treatment cost and increased culling rates, plus there is animal welfare and staff morale to consider (AHDB Dairy, 2017). Lameness can also leave cows vulnerable to further health problems, particularly fertility and metabolic issues. Embracing best practice protocols can reduce the overall cost of milk production plus save farmers stress and time as well as money.

Aberystwyth University is currently trialling Global Positioning Systems to analyse cow behaviour for early lameness detection and FC innovation site Trawscoed is using 'step matrix' technology to measure weight distribution (*force and duration*) of each hoof daily, allowing early intervention when problems do occur.

Although technology has a role in some systems, lower cost options for tackling lameness are available to every farmer. A whole farm approach will have most impact - look at conditions underfoot, standing times, foot trimming and hoof care protocols but most importantly look to identify and tackle the cause of problems. Focus on key areas:

- Reduce infection pressure
- Improve horn shape and strength
- Reduce forces on the hoof
- Target foot care protocols according to your farm situation

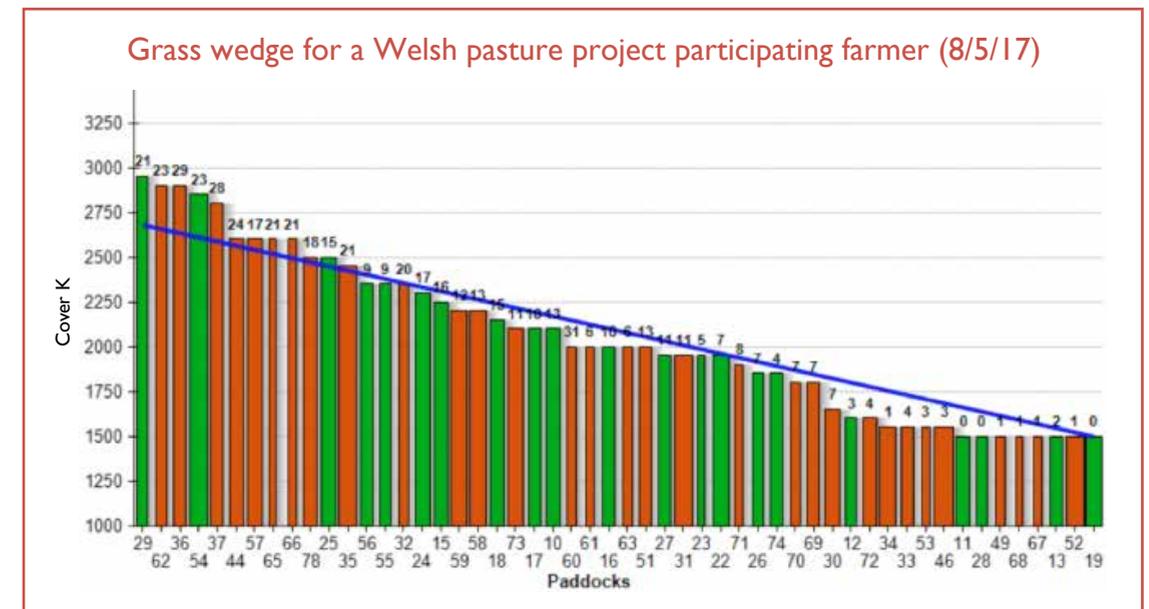
Neil Chesterton, a NZ veterinary specialist will be discussing the **AHDB Dairy Healthy Feet Programme** principles during an open event on 25th August 2017 at Nantybach farm, Llangrannog, Ceredigion (10.30am – 2.30pm). Richard Davies from AHDB Dairy says, "Neil believes that one of the key factors in the fight against lameness is reducing forces on the feet, and this includes aspects such as cow comfort and flow. We need to consider how walking on cow tracks, and handling in and around the milking parlour and buildings all contribute. The good news is there are practical ways to minimise foot damage."

To book your place, please contact **Menna Davies** on **07875 098173** or **menna.davies@ahdb.org.uk**

Welsh pasture project update 2017

Following a favourable spring period for grass growth, unseasonably dry weather in April and May left some farmers on lighter soils troubled by lower covers and grass growth rates. This was compounded for many by 1st cut silage which left the average covers on many farms around 1900-2000 KgDM/Ha. However heavier paddocks excelled during this period with warm sunshine and retained soil moisture driving daily growth rates of more than 130 KgDM/Ha.

The dry spring effect on one light soiled project farm is evident here in the grass wedge graph below for the week measured 8th of May. This shows how grazed paddocks had slower regrowth rates that left them under the blue demand line. This would lead to many spring calving herds increasing concentrate fed to their cows to lower their daily grass demand.



Many farms who also had their 1st cut silage during this period would see slower aftermath regrowth and new paddocks to move their cows into fast disappearing. However as always during the school holidays, the rain finally did arrive and the much needed moisture at the end of May and early June has driven growth rates back up to 80 or 90 KgDM/Ha/Day and beyond from the parched 50 and 60KgDM/Ha/Day.

One issue with a prolonged dry period followed by a decent dollop of rain is the willingness of ryegrass to go stemmy and heady along with any undesirable grass species and weeds that may make up the sward. Careful management of grazing during this period is vital and you may need to adopt strategies such as pre mowing prior to grazing or cleaning up pastures using less productive stock following on, or as a last resort by topping. These measures will hopefully allow for fresh regrowth and better quality leafier material next time around.

Improving Gilt Management

Good management and selection of gilts is fundamental for maintaining a productive herd. It is especially important to ensure that there are sufficient gilts available to serve in the right condition, at the required time.

Older, non-productive sows should be replaced with gilts. After a sows' fifth parity it is proven that their productivity decreases resulting in many production systems culling all sows after their fifth parity.

Gilt introduction is a challenge for many production systems, and presents risks from a disease-introduction, herd-health, and herd-stability point of view. Therefore, it is strongly encouraged where practical and possible to rear replacement gilts on the existing pig unit.



Gilts should be selected on the basis that they are genetically superior, reproductively sound and structurally correct. The number of gilts selected should be about 1.25 times the number of replacements required. The correct genotype, number of teats (*aim for 12-14*) and reproductive traits of the sow should be considered when selecting replacement gilts. It is important to visually assess gilts regularly to determine their structural and reproductive fitness.

Once gilts are selected to be retained within the herd they must be managed in a way that does not restrict their productivity potential. Feed intake, boar exposure, body weight at breeding, body weight gained in gestation, and first lactation management all determine the lifetime productivity potential of the female. Given that replacement gilts are the future of the pig herd they should be carefully managed.

If you are interested in learning about gilt management please attend the following events, where senior pig lecturer Alan Stewart from Harper Adams University will provide a detailed overview of gilt management.

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
23/08/2017 19.00 – 21.00	Improving Gilt Management	The Anglesey Arms, Mona Road, Menai Bridge, LL59 5EA	To book contact Jodie 07896 996 841 jodie.roberts@menterabusnes.co.uk
24/08/2017 19.00 – 21.00	Improving Gilt Management	The Ivy Bush Royal Hotel, 11 Spilman Street, Carmarthen, SA32 1LG	

Autumn re-seeding checklist

- Reseeding allows you to upgrade your swards with plant varieties most suited to your system, and can improve whole farm productivity and subsequently reduce costs of production. Reseeds will have 20-25% greater response to nitrogen and would be expected to yield 3-5 tonnes extra dry matter annually with a higher digestibility value (versus permanent pasture). This may allow greater stocking rates or reduced fertiliser use.
- When planning any reseed, first check if you need an Environmental Impact Assessment – this will be required if the sward contains less than 25% improved agricultural species.
- Consider soil testing well in advance of any reseed work to allow time for remedial action, and if drainage is required this should be done first. Target a pH of 6.2-6.5 and be aware that lime requirements on heavy land with rainfall over 1.5m/yr will be 2 tonne/acre every 5 years just to maintain conditions.
- Poorly established leys cost the same as a well-established one, which will pay back in as little 2 years according to Teagasc, plus is likely to have greater longevity. Use the Recommended Grass and Clover List to choose varieties suited to your needs, and consider taking specialist advice. You may decide you would like a special mix rather than buy off the shelf, so planning well in advance is beneficial.
- Seedlings will be challenged by non-sown species immediately, and from establishment onwards percentage of

sown species in the ley will slowly be in decline. Weed and pest control is key, especially in Autumn reseeds as opportunities to use post emergence spray are less than in spring as wetter conditions suit slugs and leatherjackets. Regardless of method of sowing, the seedbed must be fine, firm and ideally level. Beds should be rolled to maintain good seed to soil contact.

Graze as soon as ground conditions allow and the germinated seed passes the 'pull test' to ensure plants are well anchored by roots. This encourages tillering and development of a dense sward.

Consider -

- ✓ Environmental impact assessment
- ✓ Soil index and pH
- ✓ Drainage
- ✓ Seed mix
- ✓ Method of sowing
- ✓ Seed-bed preparation and rolling
- ✓ Weed and pest control

Join us at Tyreglwys Demonstration Farm, Llanelli for an open day with specialist Chris Duller on 'Reseeds and drainage' this autumn.

For more information please visit -
<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/developcontrol/environmental-impact-assessment>. Or Contact:

Jamie McCoy
 mobile
07985 379819
 email
jamie.mccoy@menterabusnes.co.uk



The Future of Farming

In this article the Knowledge Exchange Hub will explain some up and coming areas of research that could make a difference to the way we farm in the near future. Adopting new technologies will help us to become more efficient and productive and the aim of the Knowledge Exchange Hub is to help farmers identify which technologies and practices could be of help. More information and articles on the latest research can be found on the Farming Connect website.

CLIMATE SMART LIVESTOCK

The production of food, particularly livestock products, results in substantial emissions of greenhouse gases. Demand for meat and animal products is expected to double by 2050 as a consequence of rises in global population and shifts in consumption patterns towards meat, particularly in developing countries. As such, the need to develop measures to reduce the environmental impact of current agricultural practices is critical. The Cleaner Cows project is a collaboration between Bangor, Aberystwyth, Cardiff and Nottingham Universities, alongside DairyCo and HPC Wales, which aims to tackle this problem through life cycle assessment, economic and environmental modelling. This will help us to understand the wider effects of dairy and beef production and the knock on effects of changes in land use. Increasing efficiency by reducing harmful outputs also offers benefits in terms of reducing the cost of production as avoiding the loss of valuable products such as nitrogen, can improve farm business efficiency and therefore profitability.

LIVER FLUKE

Liver fluke infections and the level of drug resistance developing across farms is increasing, therefore, better methods of managing and controlling liver fluke infections is required. Exciting new research at IBERS is working towards the development of a rapid pen-side diagnostic test, which will hopefully differentiate between liver fluke and rumen fluke infections and determine resistance or susceptibility of the parasite to the current drug of choice, triclabendazole. Additionally, IBERS is researching into the anti-parasitic effects of plant extracts, to look at developing new chemicals using natural resources for future control strategies of liver fluke infections.

The Innovate UK APPLE project

“Application of innovative Plant breeding and Phenotyping to reduce the nutrient requirement of forages and improve Livestock production Efficiency”

The major emphasis of grassland agriculture has been on increasing dry matter yield, forage quality and animal production. Greater EU regulation means the UK grassland sector is now faced with reducing the environmental impact of production whilst simultaneously improving its production and efficiency.

Livestock farmers are being encouraged to produce more from forage, while less predictable fertiliser prices may act to increase costs.

The APPLE project is addressing these challenges by applying plant breeding and genomics technologies in parallel with enhanced phenotyping technologies within the National Plant Phenotyping Centre (NPPC) at IBERS to improve the nutrient use efficiency of perennial ryegrass and white clover varieties.

Improving the use of nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) in UK grassland systems through targeted plant breeding is a major challenge but also presents a significant opportunity for plant breeders.

This project will exploit outcomes of earlier research on perennial ryegrass and white clover that has developed novel genetic resources and breeding technologies that will enable selection for improved nutrient use efficiency in forages. This will lead to varieties of perennial ryegrass and white clover requiring less N and P per unit of dry matter production, providing an economic benefit to primary producers and environmental benefits.

The project will use the NPPC to analyse the effect of selection on nutrient use efficiency on single plants prior to seed production and evaluation in field trials. The enhanced germplasm developed will be exploited beyond the project by Germinal Holdings Ltd. (GHL) to produce finished varieties marketed by GHL in UK and overseas.



Spaced Plant Nursery



Plant Selection in NPPC



Nutrient Flow Facility

Parasitology project

Parasitic worms are a major threat and if not monitored and treated appropriately anthelmintic resistance will develop. This is one of the biggest challenges to the future health and profitability of the UK sheep industry.

New to faecal egg counting (FEC) and after incorporating this practice into their management, three of Farming Connect's Focus Farms are reaping the rewards of actively monitoring parasite burdens.

These farms are;

RUSSELL AND RHYS EDWARDS - HENDRE IFAN COCH, BRIDGEND

"We have always thought that ewes with low FEC at housing will be safe from worm burdens for the rest of the lambing season. Our vet encouraged us to take a sample 2-3 weeks pre-lambing and we were surprised to find singles with 400 eggs per gram (epg), twins with 665epg and triplets 980epg! In future, we will be monitoring and treating ewes if necessary at lambing as we have identified this is the most critical time."

GETHIN EVANS - RHOSGOCH, ABERYSTWYTH

Most lambs were treated around the 22 April as FEC showed Nematodirus was present, and as the FEC showed low levels of strongyle eggs it helped Gethin decide to worm with a white drench. Subsequently Gethin was pleased that 2 groups of lambs went 9 weeks without needing another drench – even more of a surprise came when regular testing showed counts declining without treatment. Most lambs have now been sold finished which shows reducing treatments has not compromised performance.

BENNETTS - TYN-Y-PANT, WELSHPOOL

Batches of ewes were tested last autumn. No group had a high enough worm burden to warrant an autumn dose of wormer. Having this knowledge saved both time and money for the farmer. The financial saving here, in simple terms would equate to around £285 (1000 ewes drenched + one 8-hour day for 2 workers @£10 an hour).

OPEN DAYS

DATE	LOCATION	CONTACT
31/08/2017	Hendre Ifan Coch, Bridgend	For more information, please contact: Menna Williams 01970 631405 / 07399 600146 menna.williams@menterabusnes.co.uk

Living life without lameness

Lameness is frequently cited by sheep farmers across Wales as being one of the main challenges on a day-to-day basis. Tackling this disease does however lead to significant benefits both in terms of animal welfare and also improvements in production levels. Fortunately there is a well-established '5-point plan' for tackling this disease which farmers throughout Wales are increasingly using to improve production and reduce costs. Taking into account the most effective techniques for treatment and prevention the '5-point plan' in-conjunction with veterinary advice is reducing average levels of lameness from 5% or more to less than 2%.



First developed by FAI Farms the plan contains the following recommendations:

- ✓ Vaccinate
- ✓ Cull repeat offenders
- ✓ Avoid build-up of infection through planned handling and keeping bedding dry
- ✓ Treat promptly (within 3 days) with an appropriate antibiotic
- ✓ Quarantine any incoming animals including those returning from tack

Farming Connect is working with a number of farms to implement the 5-point plan and some key messages have been coming out of this work.

On-farm experiences of the 5-point plan

- Veterinary advice should be sought at the start to ensure appropriate antibiotic use and treatment options
- Neither culling or vaccination alone are sufficient to tackle the disease in the early years
- Trimming is not necessary to treat footrot
- There may well be an increased labour requirement in the first 2 – 3 months but once levels are down to 2% or less there is less work involved in preventing lameness in the flock

At this time of year most flocks have weaned the ewes and now is the ideal time to start the 5-point plan.

Month 1	Month 2	Month 3.....
Cull any ewes identified as repeat offenders of lameness	Identify any lame ewes and treat promptly with an appropriate antibiotic – don't trim	Identify any lame ewes and treat promptly with an appropriate antibiotic – don't trim
Cull any sheep with chronically misshapen feet	If possible isolate lame animals until sound	If possible isolate lame animals until sound
Vaccinate following discussions with your vet	Develop a strategy for dealing with repeat offenders e.g. '3 strikes and they're out'	
Seek veterinary advice if you suspect that CODD* might be present in the flock		

* CODD (contagious ovine digital dermatitis)

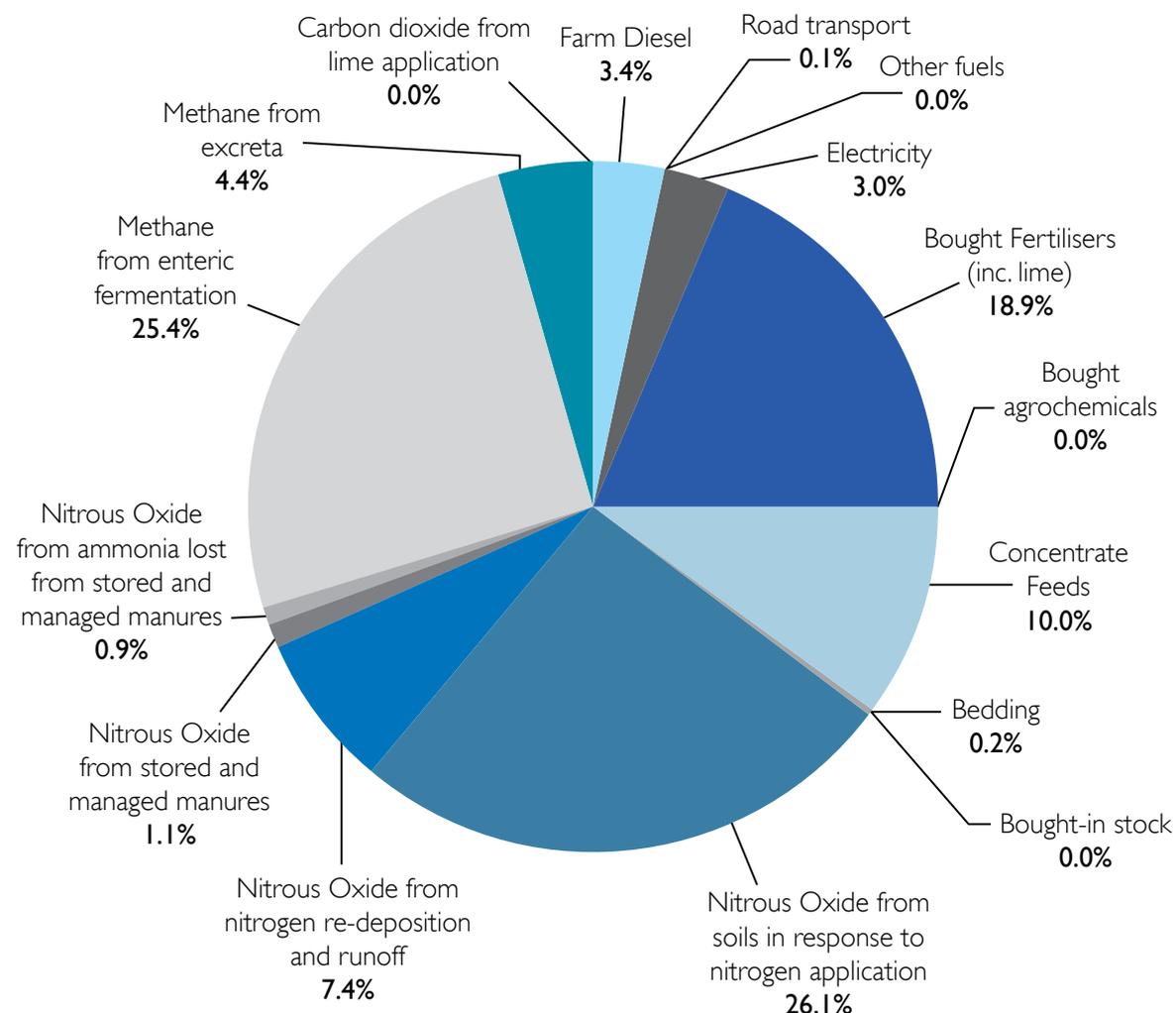
Monitoring efficiency through carbon footprinting at Tyreglwys Demonstration farm

Using the Bangor University farm carbon footprinting calculator a carbon footprint of Tyreglwys was produced based on carbon emissions between 01/04/16 and 31/03/17.

It included the calculation of the emissions arising from:

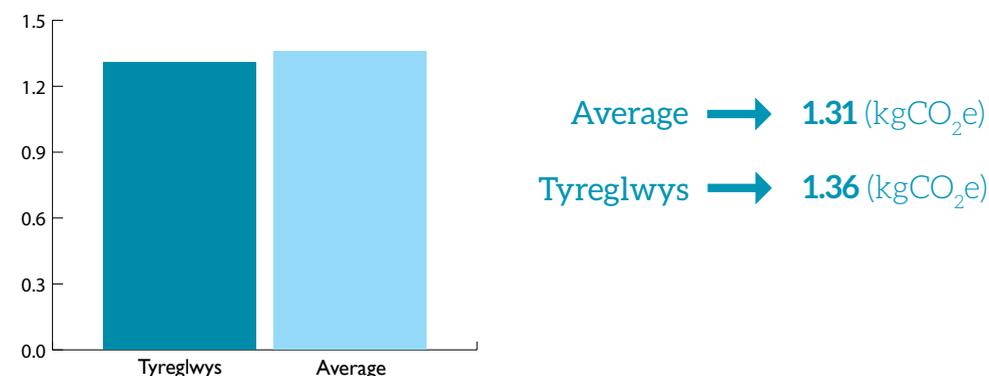
- Manufacture of farm inputs – both direct and indirect, such as fertilisers, bedding and feed
- Emissions from all processes on farm, such as energy use, emissions from livestock, manure management and soils

The pie chart shows how all the different farm activities contribute to the carbon footprint and these are expressed as carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e).



See below a graph comparing the UK average carbon footprint per litre of milk (kgCO₂e) to Tyreglwys;

Comparing the UK average and Tyreglwys' carbon footprint per litre of milk



The average carbon footprint per hectare of UK dairy farms 15,745kg CO₂e per year; Tyreglwys Farm's carbon footprints per hectare was 13,382kg CO₂e per year.

Farms also absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere, therefore the resulting balance between what is emitted and what is sequestered results in less overall emissions as shown below.

	kg CO ₂ e		
	Total Carbon Emissions	Carbon Sequestration	Carbon Balance (NET)
Carbon Footprint	1,672,766	147,102	1,525,664

There are opportunities for many farmers to reduce GHG emissions, for example:

- ✓ Improving herd health. This can potentially produce more milk and reduce GHG emissions per litre. It can also increase the chance of cows living longer, reducing culling rates as well as keeping replacement rates down. It's possible to maximise productivity by improving fertility, reducing lameness, reducing mastitis and controlling contagious diseases where possible.
- ✓ Greater milk yields per cow means less methane produced per litre. It's possible to optimise yields by calving heifers at 24-26 months and providing good quality forage.

Reducing Carbon Footprint has a clear beneficial effect on the environment but more importantly it can also reduce input costs through increased efficiency and therefore increase the business' profitability.

Efficient Milking Routines

Ffosyficer Farm Focus Site have evaluated their milking routines as part of a project with Farming Connect. As an organic farm, Ffosyficer were interested in achieving the following objectives;

- ✓ reducing milking time ✓ reducing teat end damage ✓ reducing cases of mastitis
- ✓ maximising milk quality, yield and therefore value
- ✓ reducing energy costs through enhanced milking routine ✓ developing best practice protocols

The first stage was to compare the use of washable cloths with dry paper towels to wipe the cows pre-milking with the aim of reducing Total Bacteria Count (TBC).

Washable cloths were more effective but the time spent washing the reusable cloths felt excessive by the partners involved. As a result the farmers continued to experiment and have settled on a routine where disposable paper towels are soaked in an iodine solution prior to wiping.

By spraying onto a paper towel and checking coverage it was identified that post spray nozzles were not effectively covering the teat so new nozzles were purchased for under £10.

A lactocorder measured the flow of milk from the cows and this highlighted issues such as poor cluster position and over milking which caused milk flow to be inconsistent. Take off milk flows were increased with the aim of reducing teat end damage and speed up milking without adversely effecting milk yields and mastitis rates.

Milk meters were found to be incorrectly calibrated by up to (+/-)15% and as the feed was calculated from milk meter readings this was causing under and over feeding. The milk meters were recalibrated and the savings in feed were calculated as (+/-)£30,345.

Getting to the root cause of mastitis through understanding the effect of the milking parlour and milking procedure on teat end damage is a step forward to reduce farm antibiotic use.

If individual businesses were to undertake similar testing of milking equipment and procedures, they could highlight areas of inefficiency and could improve milk quality, cow health and profitability.



For more information about how your farm or forestry business can benefit from bespoke business support and technical advice please call our **Advisory Service** on **08456 000 813**.

AVIAN INFLUENZA - THE FACTS

Avian Influenza, also known as bird flu, is a disease that affects poultry including chickens, ducks and geese.



THERE ARE 2 TYPES OF AVIAN INFLUENZA.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is the more serious type. It is often fatal in birds.

The main clinical signs of HPAI in birds are:

Swollen head - blue discolouration of neck and throat - loss of appetite - respiratory distress such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling - diarrhoea - fewer eggs laid - increased mortality.

Clinical signs can vary between species of bird and some species (*for example ducks and geese*) may show minimal clinical signs.

Low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) is usually less serious. It can cause mild breathing problems, but affected birds will not always show clear signs of infection.

The severity of LPAI depends on the type of bird and whether it has any other illnesses.

The disease spreads from bird to bird by direct contact or through contaminated body fluids and faeces, causing birds to fall ill and die. It can also be spread by contaminated feed and water or by dirty vehicles, clothing and footwear. The virus can survive in the environment for at least 50 days in cool damp conditions however, it is not an airborne disease. Early detection is reliant on good surveillance.

Good biosecurity is essential to protect domestic flocks from infection. Poultry keepers should discuss biosecurity with their vet, and at the very least should:

- ✓ Thoroughly cleanse and disinfect boots, clothing and equipment before and after contact with birds and their housing.
- ✓ Protect feed stores and ensure a clean water supply.
- ✓ For outdoor flocks, provide feed and water from a covered area.
- ✓ Prevent direct and indirect contact between domestic poultry and wild birds.
- ✓ Ensure all visitors adhere to biosecurity protocols.

By taking these simple precautions, you can help protect your birds' welfare, avoid further disease controls for other poultry keepers in your area and avoid UK-wide restrictions on overseas trade. This will help safeguard jobs and support the UK poultry industry.

Poultry keepers must keep a close watch on their birds for any signs of disease, and must seek prompt advice from their vet if they have any concerns. AI is a notifiable disease and if suspected must be reported to the Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA) on 0300 303 8268. Further information on the disease, including biosecurity guidance, is available from the Welsh Government here: <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/disease/avianflu/?lang=en>

Make the most of your Mentor

When Eifion Pughe had the opportunity at just 24 years of age to farm in his own right, he made it his mission to create an economically viable business fit to survive the challenges that lie ahead for Welsh family farms.

Eifion's desire to improve year-on-year performance on his 145-acre holding at Tal-y-wern, near Machynlleth, not only required energy and initiative but technical excellence too.

He sourced that advice, information and support at virtually no financial cost to his fledgling business from an array of Farming Connect schemes, events and trial work.

"We are all going to have to get smarter in the way we run our businesses so if I can access free advice or anything else that is going to help my business it would be foolish not to take advantage of that," insists Eifion, who takes a professional and business-like approach to farming.

"I try to go to any Farming Connect meeting that is local and related to what I'm trying to do or to what I'm thinking of doing on this farm because I gain a lot of valuable information that could save me money."

Some of that cost saving is the result of guidance Eifion has received from his Farming Connect Mentor, Flintshire livestock farmer and former Farming Connect Demonstration Farmer, Meilir Jones.

Eifion has sold his suckler herd because it wasn't financially viable and had a cattle shed standing empty.

"I asked Meilir to come here as a mentor to give me some ideas of what I could do with the shed and improve performance."

Eifion is now contract rearing dairy-bred beef calves to a minimum of 120kg for Dunbia through the company's dairy calf to beef scheme.

"Meilir showed me that by increasing the daily liveweight gain of the calves by 0.1kg by simply monitoring feed a bit better I could improve my return by £10 a head."

"He helped me look closely at how I can improve performance to gain that little bit extra."

Once he has finished rearing this batch of animals, Eifion plans to refill the shed with his own calves, which he will sell through the Dunbia YFC Integrated Beef Scheme.

Make the most of the wealth of knowledge available through peer to peer learning. Our network of **47** farmer and forester mentors can provide up to **22.5 hours** of support and guidance.

Visit www.gov.wales/farmingconnect to access the **Mentor Directory** to select a mentor or call **08456 00013**.

Avoiding a 'hard' Brexit is our priority -

Welsh women in agriculture set out what needs to be done as the industry prepares to leave Europe



Continued access to a single market, an integrated rural training and education policy and the risks of reduced financial support for farmers are just some of the critical issues facing Welsh farm businesses. These are some of the key findings set out in a new report which a group of more than 20 women working in the industry in Wales presented to Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment and Rural Affairs, at a specially convened meeting on 6 July in Cardiff Bay.

Supported through Farming Connect's Agrisgôp programme, three regional groups of dynamic, focused women have over the past year been collaborating to produce a report which will now contribute to the conversation which the Welsh Government will have with other key stakeholders and which will directly influence the development of an Agricultural Policy for Wales post-Brexit.

Agrisgôp leader and trained coach and mediator Alice Lampard, who led the South West group emphasised the importance of empowering and encouraging women to ensure their voices and opinions are heard and valued at this important time.

"Wales now has an opportunity to lead the way in policy development and thinking in

terms of the new British Agricultural Policy and resulting Welsh policy which will sit alongside.

"This new report identifies the considerable challenges which inevitably lie ahead while also setting out recommendations on what the industry can do to capitalise on the opportunities which, we hope are also within reach," said Ms. Lampard.

The topics of discussion given most attention were summarised in seven specific headings namely trade; education; financial support; animal health and welfare, cross cutting themes including planning policy, broadband and rural support services; marketing and legislation.

Agrisgôp leader and financial expert Sally Herdman who led the South East women's group said, *"Closer working relationships and improved communications between the industry and Welsh Government will be the catalyst to ensuring that Wales is represented at the UK Government's negotiating table, and I'm delighted that Agrisgôp has been able to support these groups and ensure that the female perspective is taken into account,"* said Sally.

To read the 'A View on Brexit' report in full visit www.gov.wales/farmingconnect



Events Timetable

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	CONTACT
15/08/17 11:00-15:00	Improving Piglet Survival	PantY Belliau	
23/08/17 19:00-21:00	Improving Gilt Management	The Angelsey Arms Hotel, Mona Rd, Menai Bridge, LL59 5EA	Jodie Roberts 07985 379880 jodie.roberts@menterabusnes.co.uk
24/08/17 19:00-21:00	Improving Gilt Management	The Ivy Bush Royal Hotel, 11 Spilman Street, Carmarthen, SA31 1LG	
24/08/17 14:00-17:00	Improving farm efficiency through better grass utilisation and sheep genetics	Nant yr Efail, Betws yn Rhos, Abergele, Conwy, LL22 8AL	Rhys Davies 07896 996841 rhys.davies@menterabusnes.co.uk
24/08/17	Muck & Soil Event	Gelli Aur College Farm, Golden Grove, Carmarthen, SA32 8NJ	
31/08/17 14:00-16:00	Getting to grips with worm and fluke control in sheep	Hendre Ifan Coch, Blackmill, Bridgend, CF35 6EN	Menna Williams 07399 600146 menna.williams@menterabusnes.co.uk
04/09/17	Farming for the Future 19:00-21:30	Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, Machynlleth, SY20 8DP	08456 000 813 cyswlltffermio@menterabusnes.co.uk
05/09/17		Ysgol Uwchradd Y Trallwng, Trallwng, SY21 7RE	
07/09/17		Ysgol Uwchradd Aberhonddu, Aberhonddu, LD3 9SR	
11/09/17		Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen, Caernarfon, LL55 1HW	
12/09/17		Ysgol Maes Garmon, Yr Wyddgrug, CH7 1JD	
14/09/17		Gwesty Nantyllyn, Clunderwen, SA66 7SU	
14/09/17 14.30-18.30	Adding value to the Welsh uplands: food, fibre and the environment	Pwllpeirian Research Centre, Cwmystwyth, Aberystwyth, SY23 4AB	Catherine Nakielny 07985 379890 catherine.nakielny@menterabusnes.co.uk
18/09/17 19:00-21:30	Farming for the Future	Prifysgol Cymru y Drindod Dewi Sant, Llanbed, SA48 7ED	08456 000 813 cyswlltffermio@menterabusnes.co.uk
19/09/17	Women in Agriculture 10.00-16.00	Pentref Portmeirion	08456 000 813 cyswlltffermio@menterabusnes.co.uk
21/09/17		Castell Aberteifi	
27/09/17 10.45-14:00	Calf to Calving	Coleg Llysfasi, Rhuthun, LL15 2LB	
26/09/17	Venture Workshops: Understand the key steps involved in setting up a joint Venture	Brecon Castle Hotel, LD3 9DB	Gwen Davies 01745 770039 gwen.davies@menterabusnes.co.uk
27/09/17		Welshpool Livestock Market	
03/10/17		Llety Cynin, SA33 4JR	
04/10/17		Feathers Hotel, SA46 0AQ	
10/10/17		Celtic Royal Hotel, LL55 1AY	
11/10/17		Ruthin Livestock Market	