

THE MAGAZINE FOR FARMING & FORESTRY IN WALES

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ISSUE 20 - March/April 2019 | www.gov.wales/farmingconnect

'GRASS GIVES WELSH FARMERS A COST ADVANTAGE'

- Lloyd and Daphne Holterman



Daphne Holterman

During our visit to Wales for the [2019 Farming Connect Wales Farming](#) Conference, we have been very impressed by the sheer diversity of dairy systems here.

Wales has year-round and block calving patterns, a variety of housing systems and different feeding strategies; it demonstrates the flexibility of the cow and how she can be profitable in all these situations.

We have been impressed by how much grass farmers in Wales can grow; the climate lends itself to that and it gives Welsh farmers a very strong cost advantage. In Wisconsin, herds can graze for four or five months of the year then we have snow.

The Welsh dairy industry is in a very competitive position because it has a strong liquid market - that is a big plus.

To capitalise on that competitive advantage, we have noted that the farms we have visited are continually improving their management systems and efficiencies by utilising technology like genomics and milk recording; that should be a goal for every farm in Wales. Don't stagnate by celebrating your past successes for too long.

The dairy industry is accustomed to volatility. In the good years, farmers must take care of their profits and roll some of these forward so that there are reserves when things are not so good.

All businesses must evolve to stay relevant and competitive, whether that is by diversifying to increase income or by no longer doing something that is not working.

People are as important as animals on farms, and as businesses grow, the role of people will become even more critical. Train those people well and the whole business will benefit.

As for staff who like neither your cows, your system nor you, they should leave and find a job they like better!



Lloyd Holterman

Exciting opportunities anticipated for Welsh agriculture

Welsh farmers must not fear challenges that lie ahead as their global competitors face greater hurdles, suggests agri-food consultant Dr Jonathan Birnie.

The impact of drought, pests, disease and soil loss on yields from agriculture will be felt less in Wales than in other parts of the world, Dr Birnie predicts.

As an example, water shortages had pushed up irrigation costs on farms in some parts of the US to \$260/hectare from \$16. In contrast, Wales's ability to grow grass and grain is significant, he told delegates at the 2019 Farming Connect Wales Farming Conference.

“Output and productivity in Wales can increase, and we have 70 million consumers sitting beside us.”

He believes exciting opportunities lie ahead for agriculture in Wales as demand from a burgeoning world population increases.

By 2050, global population will be 9.2 billion. “People need more food and that is good news for farmers.

“There is considerable reason for optimism; the market trends look good, but it is up to you to grab those opportunities.”

Brexit could create short-term distortions, but the market will rebalance, he said.



Good market opportunities exist outside Europe - if every person in China ate 1kg more meat each year, it would account for the UK's entire red meat and poultry production.

“There is a lot of potential if you look for it. There is huge demand for meat products globally, not necessarily at the right price yet, but it is coming.”

He suggested farmers should focus on margins instead of farmgate prices. For beef farmers, that could mean finishing cattle at 20 months instead of 28, removing nine months of costs from their systems.

He advised farmers to keep learning. Last year, Farming Connect held 1200 knowledge transfer events and 6500 farmers undertook training through Farming Connect. “Research shows that the average income of farmers who undergo continuous professional development is 12% higher than those who don't,” he said.





Link between Genomic Profitable Lifetime Index (g£PLI) and phenotype

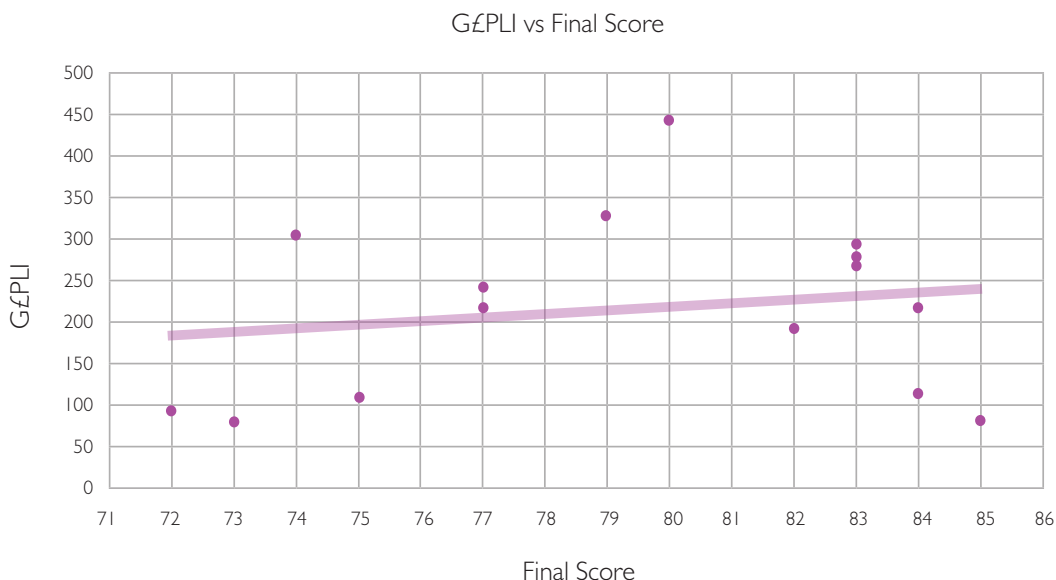
The first 15 calves born and genotyped in 2016 were recently linear assessed by a Holstein UK classifier to evaluate the conformation phenotype as in-milk heifers against the original genomic £Profitable Lifetime Index (July 2016). Linear assessment is an independent and objective measure of 22 individual type traits of the animal which support four key elements of the cow: **body conformation, dairy strength, legs and feet and mammary.**

It is crucial that information from these assessments feed into the genomic evaluation system so information on young genomic proven bulls include the most reliable type information possible.

The black and white breed has seen some minor issues and trends such as shorter teats and straighter legs in the linear scores of some high g£PLI bulls and heifers. This might not be a problem on some systems, but could be for others e.g. cows on grazing systems might need additional flex in the rear leg set to facilitate longer walking distances. Future Index weightings can be changed to correct these linear faults.



Fig 1. Marian Mawr 3328 – GP83



Graph 1. G£PLI vs Final score and trendline

Although limited in number and without a definitive trend to be seen in the above graph, higher g£PLI heifers at Marian Mawr scored well with room to develop and mature beyond their Good Plus (GP) score. Past studies have shown that heifers who calve down at 22-24 months and score GP80-84 points in the first lactation tend to be more profitable than

older heifers who score higher, or who fall into the lower grades. A contradiction to this particular rule of thumb is heifer number 3307 who scored the highest grade (VG85pts) yet had one of the lowest g£PLI values among the 15 scored. In some circumstances, this heifer would have been sold or bred to a beef bull if a decision was based only on her index.

This highlights how important it is to evaluate each animal on their phenotype as well as its genotype and a case in point that genomic evaluations are **59%-65%** reliable, not 99%. Likewise, heifers with high g£PLI values are not necessarily the most correct or fanciest looking, but might have improved health, production and longevity traits. Ultimately, a profitable long-living animal, regardless of breed or system, is one that is well managed and with a balance of correct type, health and production.

Soils hold key to Welsh farm resilience say Nuffield Scholars

Understanding soils will allow Welsh farmers to develop sustainable farming systems that fit with the environmental demands of their consumers and policy makers.

That was the overarching message of three Nuffield Scholars who shared their research with the 2019 Farming Connect Wales Farming Conference at Builth Wells.



Richard Tudor

Richard Tudor, a Powys livestock farmer who is currently converting his 800-acre upland farm to dairy, suggests physical and biological metrics should be used in soils analysis, not just chemical, and he thinks farmers should take their own samples to really get to know their soils.

“You will learn more about your soils than you do by just waiting for the analysis to come back,” he told farmers.

Farmers must build life into the soil by providing the optimum conditions for it to thrive.

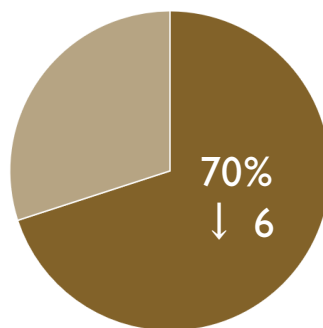
“Compaction has to be taken seriously and species diversity encouraged.”

Only 5% of UK grassland soils are analysed annually which means farmers are applying nutrients blindly.

“To grow healthy plants, you need healthy soils and that involves physical and chemical elements and in a small but significant way, biological elements too.

You need to focus on all three elements, not just one in isolation,” said Mr Tudor.

The optimum pH for soils to thrive is 6.3, he said, but of the 4500 soils sampled through Farming Connect in Wales in a single year, 70% were below 6.



“Some farmers think that 5.8 or 5.9 is close enough, but a pH difference of just 0.1 can mean that soils are many more times acidic.”



Geraint Powell, who was brought up on a family farm in the Brecon Beacons and now lambs 4200 New Zealand Romney ewes in the Cotswolds, studied techniques for developing productive and profitable systems which achieve environmental targets.

Some of the farms he visited were adopting processes that mimic nature, to produce the optimum from their land; they educated themselves on the complex links between the sun, soil, plant and their animals.

If the eco-system on farms can't function then neither can the livestock it supports, insisted Mr Powell.

Embracing the benefits of soil health and plant diversity will result in greater resilience, he said. "The most profitable place to keep livestock is where nature thrives."



Geraint Powell

Mr Powell advised farmers to plan for change now. "If you don't have a 200-year plan, you have no plan at all; long-term planning was definitely working for the farms I visited."

He told farmers to take time to "sit back and read the language of their land".

He predicted that Welsh agriculture faced some "bumps in the road" but pointed out: "We can take comfort from the fact that we live in a place where the sun will shine, it will rain and plants will grow."



Alexander Brewster

The more organic matter that farmers can build into their soil and the more diverse the species grown, the more productive land will be, said Alexander Brewster, whose study incorporated nutrient cycles.

Mr Brewster, who manages 4000 hectares in partnership with his parents at Rotmell Farm in Perthshire, said good grassland management was vital to increase the kilogrammes of meat sold per hectare and farm profitability.

The ingredients for better pasture, he said, included diversity of plant species as well as soil structure and quality whilst the secret to good pasture hinged on understanding soils.

In areas of high rainfall, improving organic matter is critical to increase the water-holding capacity of soil. For every 1% improvement in soil organic matter, water-holding capacity increases by 2500 tonnes per hectare, he calculated.

"In practical terms, this can mean grazing earlier in the summer and later in the autumn when the weather is wet with quality grass and reduced risk of poaching."

4-1 RETURN ON RESEEDING INVESTMENT AT AWARD-WINNING BEEF FARM



Ger Dineen

An award-winning Irish beef farmer who has doubled grass production says Welsh farms can match this performance with good grassland management and a reseeding programme.

Ger Dineen runs 60 cows on 32 hectares (ha) of grassland in County Cork where he grows an average of 14t DM/ha, up from 7t DM/ha in 2012.

He has achieved this by reseeding with tetraploids and clover and by managing grassland well.

“Doubling output is like having a second farm next door,” points out Mr Dineen, 2017 Irish Beef Farmer of the Year, who farms at Knockroe, Kilnartyra.

But increasing the performance of grass leys won’t happen overnight, he cautions.

“The soil chemistry has got to be right and you have got to use the right grass varieties for your farm,” he advised the 2019 Farming Connect Wales Farming Conference.

“We don’t use bag seed mixes; we choose varieties from the recommended list.”

Mr Dineen reseeds between 10-15% of the farm annually. “For every €100 I spend on reseeding, I get €300 - €400 back in higher production; it is a no-brainer.”

His cows and calves are at grass between February and November; early turnout is worth €1200 a week in February.

“Some farmers say it is too much bother to be strip grazing in February, and yes, it is a bit of work, but if it means €1200 a week in my pocket, it is worth any hardship.

“As long as there is sufficient shelter for the calves, the cattle are out in February and if the weather happens to be bad, they are out for three hours then come in for three.”

Creep fences allow calves to graze ahead of the cows, resulting in some bulls achieving a daily liveweight gain (DLWG) of **2kg** from grass alone; the average DLWG for Mr Dineen’s bulls is **1.7kg** and **1.5kg** for heifers.



Future proofing a beef unit - embracing technology to improve target specification success

Sarah Hughes - Red Meat Technical Officer, Farming Connect

Farming Connect has started a new project to measure the efficiency of a beef finishing unit near Cardigan. The project will be incorporating EID technology, measuring daily liveweight gain (DLWG) to increase finishing efficiency and manage cow health. The project will embrace the principles of 'Measure to Manage' to enable the farmer to make decisions based on DLWG of the cattle and to consider what interventions are needed to improve efficiency on the unit reducing days to slaughter.

The end goal for the farmer is to be able to make factual decisions for the enterprise based on a sound knowledge of his cattle weights and costs. This in turn will enable him to reduce his time to finish the cattle whilst still hitting the required specification from the processor.

The farm's vet will carry out a herd health plan to identify any issues that may have been within the bought-in cattle. Farming Connect, along with Hefin Richards

(Nutritional Specialist), will carry out a baseline of nutritional rations for the farm system as it currently stands prior to the project starting and compare costs to new rations. Silage samples from the pit will be analysed monthly and any changes to the rations will be made in response.

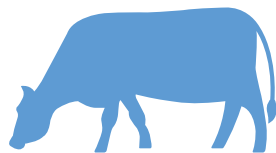
The cattle will be EID tagged and use a Tru-Test system and reader to monitor DLWG and using the system to record additional data such as breed and birth date. Data from the EID/weight system will be used to adjust rations, and full costs of rations will be taken for project end return on investment analysis. The farmer will also aim to maximise profitability in the final weeks of finishing by looking at a graph of DLWG against feed cost and aim to sell the animal before the point where they cross. The farm is keen to look at how EID technology and routine weighing can be integrated into the system to aid in monitoring physical performance and aid financial decision making.



Incorporating homegrown maize into the ration at an Anglesey beef finishing enterprise is resulting in cattle achieving slaughter targets earlier

Arwyn Jones farms in partnership with his mother, Eirwen, at [Fferm Plas](#), a Farming Connect Demonstration Farm at Llandegfan.

Arwyn finishes 700 head of cattle a year - animals aged from 18-22 months and weighing around 500kg, which he mainly sources from Gaerwen market.



In recent years, he has increased sheep numbers and he feels this has had an impact on the quality and quantity of the silage he can grow.

To counter this, and to reduce a reliance on purchased feedstuffs, he now grows maize – 21 acres initially, increasing to 41 acres in 2018; this year he plans to plant up to 60 acres.

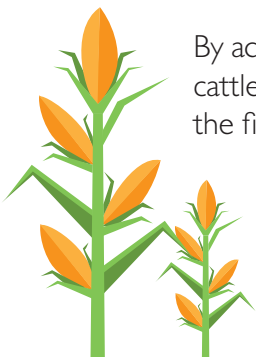
The finishing ration is made up of homegrown maize silage, straw, barley, wheat and bought-in biscuit meal, maize gluten, yeast, minerals and molasses.

“It used to take animals ten days or more to transition to the finishing ration, but since we have included maize, we can mostly go straight in with the finishing diet; there is no growth check and we are finishing them earlier,” he told farmers attending a Farming Connect open day.

“That can mean a difference of **£20-£30** in the cost of finishing a single animal because it costs us money every day it is in the shed.” He stressed the importance of testing maize frequently for quality and to re-test if the result isn’t as expected.

When he first had his 2018 maize silage tested, it showed a dry matter of 26.9%, 11.4ME and 26.3% starch. The results were poorer than expected, so he asked for it to be re-tested, and the results were rather different.

By adding maize to the diet, cattle immediately transition to the finishing ration.



"If we hadn't re-tested, we would have continued to spend an **additional £98 a day** on maize gluten alone; money we didn't need to be spending," he said, and now tests the maize silage every month.

A month later and further into the clamp, the properties had changed significantly with a dry matter of 33.9%, 11.6 ME and 37% starch.

Presenting feed in bunkers instead of behind a barrier is also contributing to higher daily liveweight gains and quicker finishing times. "With bunkers, there is never a minute in the day when there isn't feed in front of the cattle, and it is more labour efficient because we don't have to push the feed up," he explained.

He sells a large proportion of his cattle to Dunbia, ensuring they are clean and clipped before they leave the farm.

Laura Talbot, Beef Agriculture Manager at Dunbia, said cattle leaving farms dirty had been a particular problem in recent months, possibly as a result of farmers attempting to make savings on bedding costs and poor weather.

Ms Talbot, who spoke at the open day, stressed the importance of presenting clean cattle for slaughter. Failure to do so can result in cost implications for farmers and the potential challenge of carcasses not reaching the criteria due to contamination from dirt on the hide.

At the open day, farmers also received advice on health issues associated with the housing period from vet Oli Hodgkinson of Trefaldwyn Vets who was the Farmers Weekly 2018 Farm Advisor of the year winner.

Mr Hodgkinson advised that housing was the ideal time to treat cattle for parasitic diseases, with dung sampling the best way to ensure treatments are not being administered unnecessarily.

He warned farmers not to blanket treat all cattle for worms as adult cows will have immunity. The focus should instead be on dosing youngstock, said Mr Hodgkinson.

"If there is a known fluke problem, ask your vet whether a combination product would be appropriate," he recommended.



Arwyn Jones

Exploring the potential benefits of identifying Myostatin variants in commercial beef herds

The Myostatin gene is found in all mammals and influences the production of a protein that controls muscle development. Natural mutations of the gene produce proteins that are less effective at controlling muscle development, which results in increased muscle mass, more commonly known as the double muscle gene in cattle. There are nine known mutations of the Myostatin gene in cattle, some of which are breed-specific and others which affect more than one breed.

The main aim of this project is to DNA sample animals within a commercial beef herd containing around **75%** Limousin genetics in order to identify the Myostatin variants carried by current and prospective breeding females. While the presence of certain Myostatin variants can be beneficial for carcass attributes, certain combinations can lead to more difficult calvings and reduced fertility and milking ability.

Farming Connect is working with Wyn Williams at Penrhyn Farm in order to determine which variant of the Myostatin gene the animals in his herd are carrying, thus providing valuable information for making mating decisions to potentially reduce calving difficulties and produce replacement females with good maternal characteristics.

This project will provide a useful blueprint for pedigree and commercial beef producers who are confronted by the issue of difficult calvings, as Myostatin represents one of the influencing factors.

Iceberg Diseases in Sheep

College Farm, Trefecca, Brecon

Elan Davies - Red Meat Technical Officer, Farming Connect

There are many conditions that can cause ill thrift in sheep flocks, such as **liver fluke**, **worm burdens** and **trace element deficiencies**. Ill thrift can also be caused by the presence of the following 'iceberg diseases': Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma/ Jaagsiekte (OPA), Maedi Visna (MV), Caseous Lymphadenitis (CLA), Johne's Disease (OJD) and Border Disease (BD). These diseases are termed 'iceberg diseases' as they are reported in fewer numbers than actually exist.

Awareness of these diseases is low, with a recent survey suggesting fewer than 5% of farmers screen for them routinely. This is mainly due to the diseases being very hard to diagnose and can exist in a flock for a number of years before any clinical signs are seen. These iceberg diseases pose significant challenges to the productivity of sheep flocks and can prove very costly to the farmer. This means that the diseases can often spread significantly before they are detected, therefore, controlling the diseases can then be difficult. **Clinical signs are often not seen until around 50% of the flock is infected and at that stage eradication is very difficult, if not impossible. It is very important to know which ones are present so that they can be tackled appropriately.**

An investigation into these diseases is now underway at a Farming Connect focus farm near Brecon. College Farm in Trefecca discovered they had OPA following a post mortem of an ewe that died suddenly in 2017. This ewe was in good condition when she died, showing that not all sheep that are carriers of these diseases are thin and showing clinical signs. By working closely with the local vet and vet practice, the main aim of this project is to fully understand the true health status of the flock at College Farm; identify what diseases (if any) are present, and develop effective control and prevention measures.



Early Disease Detection and Improved Biosecurity is key to Reducing Antibiotic Use for Poultry



Farming Connect has recently held a number of events focusing on antibiotic resistance and how we can be more responsible in using antibiotics. Ian Jones from Hafren Veterinary Group led a meeting in Welshpool in January specifically for poultry farmers on this topic.

Ian explained the wider issue of how resistance is affecting human health and that agriculture can have some influence on safeguarding humans against antimicrobial resistance by continuously reviewing biosecurity at all stages of production and by adopting disease management practices.

In recent years there has been a large increase in free range systems in Wales that is creating biosecurity challenges because the farmed birds are sharing the same spaces as wild birds.

Strict on-farm biosecurity combined with vaccination will help Welsh egg and broiler producers continue their remarkable downward trend in antibiotic use.

As an industry, efforts have already been made to reduce the usage of, or to remove entirely, antibiotics considered critically important to human health (CIAs). Second and third-generation cephalosporins have not been used in poultry production since 2012, colistin was removed in 2016 and the use of fluoroquinolones has been cut by 91% in six years.

Early detection of disease is also essential to identify which disease needs to be treated. If a disease challenge is treated promptly, there is a reduced risk of the birds being attacked by another disease challenge. Once a disease develops within the flock, it is more difficult to control. Ian calculated that laboratory fees are a relatively small investment when compared to the cost of treatments or production losses if disease escalates.

Ian was not advocating farmers to stop using antibiotics. It's clear that antibiotics are and should continue to be accessible to maintain the health and welfare of birds. A "little as possible, but as much as necessary" approach should be taken to ensure further resistance issues can be avoided and the future use of antibiotics for human and poultry health will be safeguarded.

VENTURE GET ON THE FARMING LADDER

Do you want to Venture into running your own farming business?

Venture matches new entrants with established landowners and provides business and legal guidance to set up a joint venture.

The following opportunities are currently advertised. To see the full details for these farms, enrol with the Venture programme as a Seeker by completing your profile on the [Farming Connect website](#).

Location	Size of Holding (hectares)	Sector	Ref. No
Llangadog	38	Sheep	47
Haverfordwest	2	Horticulture	87
Carmarthen	40	Sheep	105
Monmouth	48	Beef & Sheep	151
Hay-on-Wye	60	Beef & Sheep	169
Abergele	100	Beef & Sheep	189
Llanfyllin	29	Forestry	220
St Davids	1.2	Horticulture	239
Carmarthen	36	Beef & Sheep	244
Aberystwyth	108	Beef & Sheep	268
Denbigh	150	Beef & Sheep	273
Cardigan	73	Dairy	326
Conwy	47	Dairy	340
Swansea	18	Beef & Sheep	412

Alternatively, are you already farming with someone else but would like to formalise the agreement, **invest** or **increase your commitment** to the business?

Get in touch to see how we can help.

On the other hand, if you are a landowner and would like to bring **new** blood into your business, contact us to **advertise your opportunity** anonymously.



CEFNOGI MENTRAU AR Y CYD
SUPPORTING JOINT VENTURES

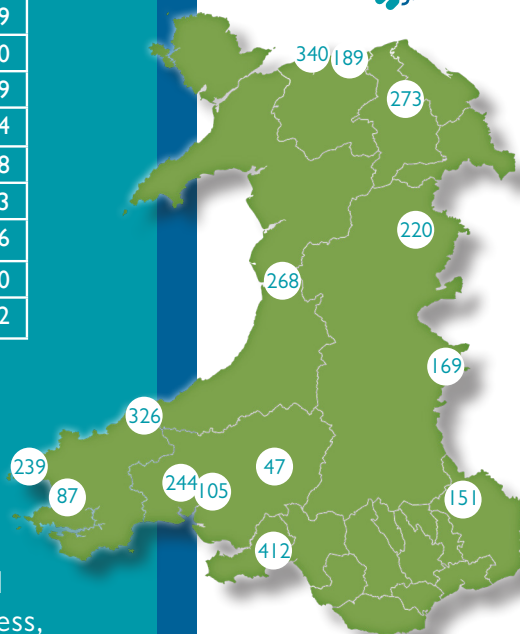
92

people are already matched up and are working on their business plans



19

have completed the process and have established their new joint ventures



THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT FOR A CEREDIGION FARMING COUPLE AND THEIR NEW YOUNG BUSINESS PARTNER



CEFNOGI MENTRAU AR Y CYD
SUPPORTING JOINT VENTURES

It's 18 months since Gareth Stephens voiced concerns about the future of his 250-acre beef and sheep farm to one of his old school friends at Cardigan market.

It was a fateful conversation!

He was chatting to the dad of the young farmer who is now a share partner in the business.

The subsequent introduction to Aled Morgan and then tapping into the services of Farming Connect's Venture programme gave Gareth and his wife Pam, whose three grown up children have their own careers, the perfect opportunity to scale back their day to day involvement with farming while remaining in their own farmhouse and continuing to run their caravan business.

Aled, in his early 30s, an agriculture graduate of Aberystwyth University and an experienced stockman whose family farms locally, is now an equal share partner in the 250-acre beef and sheep holding.

Having attended a Farming Connect succession planning surgery last year, Gareth and Pam already knew about Venture. Once they realised they had found the perfect business partner, they knew a joint venture would be a more satisfactory solution than employing a stock person.

Although they didn't need to utilise the matchmaking element of the service, they were able through Farming Connect's Advisory Service to commission a new business plan which was provided by Wendy Jenkins of Wales-based agricultural consultancy CARA.

"I worked with both Gareth and Pam and Aled, enabling them to take stock of all the farm assets and resources to be included in any new formal share-farming arrangement and providing a strategic business plan which set out how the farm could further develop and progress going forward.

"It was an opportunity for both sides to consider what they could bring to the partnership, their expectations of how the arrangement would work in practice and what they wanted to achieve long-term," said Mrs Jenkins.

Aled now owns and has sole responsibility for half the farm's stock. With all farm outgoings and running costs offset against income, remaining profits are split between the Stephens family and Aled.

Venture has also provided fully funded legal advice from specialist rural solicitor Manon Williams of Agri Advisor to help the partners select the most appropriate legal framework.

Aled, who still helps out at his family's farm and undertakes contracting work when time permits, has been provided with accommodation by Gareth and Pam, which means he is on site during especially busy times.

Just 18 months on, Gareth and Pam are delighted with the outcome of the new joint venture.

"We didn't want to either sell or rent the farm, but involving a young farmer who is incredibly hard-working, knowledgeable and deserving of a helping hand, has proved especially rewarding."

For the full story about this joint venture, visit Farming Connect's website.



Gareth and Pam Stephens and Aled Morgan

Implementing advanced nutritional management in the Welsh sheep industry



EIP WALES

Cydweithio er ffyniant gwledig
Collaborating for rural success

Our breeding ewes require a fine balance of both major and trace elements in varying amounts to be healthy and productive. In this EIP Wales project, 12 farmers from across North Wales are utilising a progressive approach to nutritional planning in breeding ewes. They are investigating the individual flock needs for trace elements whilst trying to balance this against other likely causes of poor performance.

Project Update

Prior to tupping in 2018, blood, liver tissue and faecal samples were collected from 107 ewes to investigate the trace element status of the flocks utilising the NuVETNa laboratory at the University of Nottingham, whilst trying to account for other potential causes of poor performance e.g. parasites.

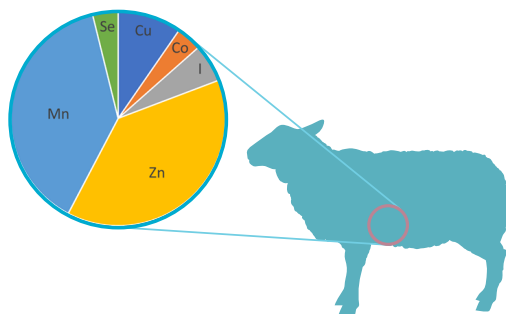
The data for each flock was collated by their vet, Dr Joseph Angell of Wern Vets which was then coupled with forage sample analysis to formulate nutritional advice for the pre-tupping and pregnancy period.

The data has shown some similarities and some differences between flocks, and the specific advice has varied from flock to flock. We found that on the basis of the investigation, one flock needed supplementing with copper, selenium and zinc. The ewes did not have any fluke or significant numbers of worms, but they did have some results that suggested that they had been fighting an infection. Addressing both the trace element requirements whilst revisiting vaccination and infection control methods are likely to lead to long-term benefits.

Many of the farmers have commented that this active investigative approach has been thought-provoking and it has created some lively discussion!

“The results, so far, show that there can be undetected under or oversupply issues, and it is important to investigate thoroughly to get a complete picture of the overall nutrition of the ewe, especially when it comes to elements such as copper. This investigative approach should allow farmers to better understand what’s going on inside the ewe before any clinical symptoms of under or oversupply of supplementation occur,” said Dr Joseph Angell.

Going forward, the flocks will now undergo further blood analyses to manage energy and protein supply closer to lambing before a further, more in-depth follow-up in the summer.



Tackling scab - a farmer led approach

Sheep scab causes serious economic and welfare losses and costs the Welsh sheep industry an estimated £5.86m a year.

A key issue is the ease of infection from flock to flock, due to the challenges of biosecurity, or different timings of treatments between neighbouring farms. The best long-term solution to scab treatment is to eradicate the disease from Wales and the rest of Britain.

In this three-year project, a large group of farmers within the Talybont, North Ceredigion area will investigate how working together, rather than a single farm effort, can improve the success of scab treatment. Hopefully, by using existing scab diagnosis and treatment techniques in a coordinated way across all farms, this will increase the effectiveness of treatment.

Project Plan

The farmers will firstly look at improving levels of farm biosecurity.

Testing and diagnosis

- A sample of each flock will be tested with the ELISA blood test. This blood test provides a greater level of accuracy than the skin scrapes more commonly used
- The test can detect scab within two weeks of infection, before visible lesions occur, allowing farmers to quickly isolate any infected animals from the flock to help stop further spreading
- If positive for scab, the infected animals will be recorded and a treatment plan between the vet and farmer will be implemented
- All neighbouring farms will be notified and will test for scab as soon as is practical

Treatment

- Appropriate treatments will be discussed with priority given to dipping where possible
- An Organophosphate (OP) dip provides a better level of certainty, and when used by qualified contractors, the risks to both human health and the environment are reduced

Follow-up visit

- Within two months of treatment, the local vet will carry out a follow-up visit to take further blood tests to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment and discuss further actions

In January 2019, Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, announced that £5 million will be available through the Rural Development Programme to deliver an industry led project to tackle sheep scab in Wales. Further details of the project will be announced in the forthcoming months.

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- ✓ Access useful websites relevant to your business
- ✓ Use any software packages you have purchased
- ✓ Resolve any IT related issues on your own personal device (e.g. PC, laptop, tablet, mobile phone)

FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO WANT TO LEARN ABOUT THE LATEST IT

Fully funded workshops will teach you how to integrate the latest IT into your own business. Visit our website for a list of workshop topics, dates, times and locations.

Learn how:

- ✓ IT can be used within your farm and forestry business
- ✓ IT is benefiting other modern agri businesses

To access fully funded IT training, you must be registered with Farming Connect. To register your interest for IT training and receive a call from one of our team, contact our Service Centre or visit the [Farming Connect website](#).

Do you know the impact that BVD can have on your herd?



Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) is a highly contagious disease of cattle and represents a major source of economic loss in the UK. There is currently a drive towards eradication through the [Gwaredu BVD](#) programme.

The BVD workshop will help farmers learn more about why they should seek to have a BVD-free herd and how to achieve that goal. The focus of the workshop will be on understanding what measures can be taken to minimise the risk of BVD entering a herd (biosecurity) and disease spreading further within an infected herd (biocontainment). Within the interactive

workshop, farmers will discuss BVD with experienced vets from their local practice and learn how to identify areas of their herd management which are high risk for the introduction or the spread of BVD. The knowledge and understanding that farmers will gain if then implemented on-farm should result in increased herd health, productivity and profitability.



This series of workshops are all underpinned by the importance of veterinary health planning and encouraging a full working partnership between farmers and their vet.

Veterinary practices across Wales are delivering fully funded short training courses through the Farming Connect Lifelong Learning and Development Programme with training jointly developed by Farming Connect and the National Animal Disease Information Service (NADIS).

In addition to the delivery of BVD workshops, the funded training programme will include modules on Countering Antibiotic and Anthelmintic Resistance, Animal Health Planning, Bovine TB Eradication, Lameness Reduction, Reducing Mastitis and Lambing Losses, Understanding Johne's Disease and Parasite Control in Sheep. All courses completed will be automatically recorded into clients CPD records on the Business Wales BOSS website, including a Lantra certificate of attendance.

For further information and upcoming workshop dates, please visit the [Farming Connect website](#).



Farming Connect One-to-one Clinics

Fully funded, bespoke one-to-one clinics



SOILS AND GRASSLAND CLINICS

A one-to-one consultation with a soils and grassland expert to discuss topics such as; nutrient requirements, weed and rush control, drainage, soil structure or rotational grazing

ANIMAL HEALTH TESTING CLINICS

Sampling, testing and one-to-one feedback from local vets

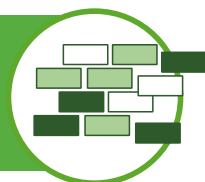


RESPONSIBLE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF MEDICINE

An opportunity to review medicine usage on-farm or discuss specific animal health issues with your local vet

INFRASTRUCTURE AND BUILDING DESIGN

A one-to-one visit to discuss ways to improve your farm infrastructure and building design to improve efficiency and to minimize risks to the environment



ADDING VALUE TO FARM WOODLAND

An assessment of where you can add value to existing or planned farm woodland

DIVERSIFICATION

A visit to discuss opportunities and ideas about maximising existing resources on your farm



Clinics will be offered on a first come, first served basis.

To register for one or more of these clinics, contact your [local Development Officer](#) or the Farming Connect Service Centre on 08456 000 813

Making Tax Digital (MTD) Compliant for April 2019 – get ready with help from Farming Connect

All farm and forestry businesses which have a taxable turnover that exceeds the VAT registration threshold of **£85,000** per annum need to keep their records digitally, using Making Tax Digital (MTD) functional compatible software, from 01 April 2019 onwards.

This VAT registration threshold excludes the Basic Payment and any other agricultural grants or subsidies, as subsidies are 'outside the scope of UK VAT'.

Businesses with taxable turnover over £85,000 in the 12 months ended 31 March 2019 will need to either: create their VAT return digitally using bridging software which links to an excel spreadsheet or use appropriate software or instruct an accountant or business adviser to undertake this on their behalf.

The new legislation affects all VAT returns which start after 1 April 2019, if your business exceeds the £85,000 threshold.

Farming Connect, through its new fully-funded ICT training programme, will provide a series of IT workshops throughout Wales, to prepare businesses for the switch from manual to digital record-keeping and prepare for online VAT returns.

Each of the two-hour workshops, with no more than 20 attendees at each, will demonstrate a range of the new software packages most appropriate for land-based businesses.

You will learn whether operating this software is something you can confidently tackle yourself, or whether you would be better advised to instruct an accountant or business adviser to do this on your behalf. Those farmers currently making online VAT returns via Excel spreadsheets may also want to consider some of the new 'bridging' software options, and again the workshops will give practical demonstrations so that you can make an informed decision on what your business needs.

For further information on Farming Connect's fully-funded ICT training programme, which includes the option of one-to-one on-farm visits and workshops arranged throughout Wales, you will need to complete an 'expression of interest' form which you can access at Farming Connect website.

For further information about the new legislation, visit [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk)

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**WALES
FARM SAFETY
PARTNERSHIP**

Farming Connect takes stark safety messages on tractor and machinery safety to market this spring – do you know your legal obligations?

Farmers, foresters, students, employers, employees, family members – if you are someone who relies on farm tractors, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and machinery, it is your responsibility to ensure that you are trained and competent to do the job. It's also essential to ensure that all vehicles and equipment in use are well maintained and compliant with the law!

This is the stark message Farming Connect will be taking out to the industry this spring in a series of short practical demonstrations in a new Farm Health & Safety Roadshow which will run throughout the day at Welshpool Market (29 April); Carmarthen Market (3 May) and Dolgellau Market (10 May).

The events are part of an ongoing awareness campaign launched last year by the Wales Farm Safety Partnership (WFSP), a collaboration of all the key agricultural stakeholders in Wales, who are working together to reduce the tragically high statistics of farm fatalities and injuries in Wales year on year.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ROADSHOW

29/04/19 10:00 - 14:00	Welshpool Livestock Market, Welshpool, Powys SY21 8SR
03/05/19 10:00 - 14:00	Carmarthen Livestock Market, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire SA33 5DR
10/05/19 10:00 - 14:00	Dolgellau Livestock Market, Dolgellau, Gwynedd LL40 1AB



Brian Rees



Lowri Rees-Roberts



Glyn Davies



Chris Hughes

A visit to the roadshow will also give you the chance to speak to one of Farming Connect's approved farm 'health and safety' mentors, who provide up to 22.5 hours of fully-funded confidential on-farm guidance.

They will also be giving out valuable advice and free literature, including HSE's 'What a good farm looks like' booklet on how you can make your land-based business a safer place to work and make sure you comply with the law.



Eligible farmers registered with Farming Connect can apply for a wide range of training courses on many different aspects of farm safety during the next skills application window which is open from Monday 03 June to Friday 28 June.

For further information on all training courses; a list of approved training providers; e-learning options and to download some of the latest literature on farm safety visit www.gov.wales/farmingconnect.

For more comprehensive advice on farm health and safety visit: www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture or www.yellowwellies.org

Events Timetable

Controlling Digital Dermatitis in Cattle	
03/04/19 10:30 - 14:30	White Horse, Overton, Wrexham LL13 0DT
Rhys Davies - 07985 379 880 rhys.davies@menterabusnes.co.uk	

Mycoplasma Bovis - Autogenous vaccines	
04/04/19 11:00 - 14:30	Wern Farm, Bancyfelin, Carmarthenshire SA33 5NE
Abby James - 07399 970 988 abigail.james@menterabusnes.co.uk	

All things Grazing and Grassland!	
11/04/19 11:00 - 14:30	Moor Farm, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA62 3EE
Abby James - 07399 970 988 abigail.james@menterabusnes.co.uk	


Managing the Growing Lamb	
29/04/19 09:00 - 11:00	Welshpool Livestock Market, Welshpool, Powys SY21 8SR
30/04/19 14:00 - 16:00	Cae'r Ffynnon, Llanbedr, Gwynedd LL44 2HZ
01/05/19 14:00 - 16:00	Castellor, Menai Bridge, Anglesey LL59 5RR
02/05/19 10:30 - 13:00	Hendrephilip, Tregaron, Ceredigion SY25 6QB
02/05/19 17:30 - 19:30	College Farm, Trefecca, Brecon LD3 0PW
03/05/19 11:00 - 13:00	Bryntail Farm, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taff CF37 5LJ
Service Centre - 08456 000 813 farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk	

Centenary of Plant Breeding at IBERS	
01/05/19 11:00 - 13:00	IBERS, Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 3EB
Elan Davies - 07985 379 890 elan.davies@menterabusnes.co.uk	

HEALTH AND SAFETY ROADSHOW	
29/04/19 10:00 - 14:00	Welshpool Livestock Market, Welshpool, Powys SY21 8SR
03/05/19 10:00 - 14:00	Carmarthen Livestock Market, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire SA33 5DR
10/05/19 10:00 - 14:00	Dolgellau Livestock Market, Dolgellau, Gwynedd LL40 1AB

SURGERIES (09:00 - 17:00) 1 hour appointments		
Planning Surgery	03/04/19	Newtown
Succession Surgery	03/04/19	Tregaron
Marketing and Diversification Surgery	11/04/19	Cowbridge
Marketing and Diversification Surgery	12/04/19	Hermon
Marketing and Diversification Surgery	18/04/19	Carmarthen
Planning Surgery	23/04/19	Cardigan
Succession Surgery	30/04/19	Welshpool
Planning Surgery	02/05/19	Builth Wells
Succession Surgery	08/05/19	Wrexham
Marketing and Diversification Surgery	09/05/19	Ruthin
Succession Surgery	14/05/19	Rhayader
Helen Lewis - 01970 631 425 helen.lewis@menterabusnes.co.uk		

Start to Farm	
04/06/19	The Celtic Manor Resort, Newport, South Wales NP18 1HQ
Innovation, inspiration and practical advice for entrepreneurs looking to start their own farming business.	
Start to Farm UK is a joint event between Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland for aspiring agricultural entrepreneurs. The event will feature practical financial and legal advice from a range of industry professionals along with a description of a variety of land and business access models to consider.	
Canolfan Wasanaeth - 08456 000 813 cyswlltfermio@menterabusnes.co.uk	

Women in Agriculture 2019 - Year of Discovery	
20/06/19	Locations across Wales ending at the Marine Hotel, Aberystwyth
 <p>Keep an eye out for more information...</p>	
Service Centre - 08456 000 813 farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk	

All dates and information correct at the time of print