

News from the Farm Advisory Service:



Podcast: Rural Roundup Mini-Series - Trees of the Gaelic World

In our latest addition to our Rural Roundup podcast series, we bring you a mini-series on Trees of the Gaelic World.

Over four episodes, we explore the Gaelic language and the lore surrounding the Birch, Yew, Oak and Scot's Pine species. Hear all about the language and lore from Dr Michael Newton, a scholar in Celtic Studies, and speakers from the Woodland Trust share advice on the best conditions for each species and how to manage or establish these trees on our land in the current day.

Find this series by scanning the QR code below or by visiting www.fas.scot/sounds



Farm Advisory Service Newsletters

Sign up to our newsletters to receive the latest information and news in different areas of the industry, sent straight to your email inbox!

Visit www.fas.scot/newsletters to find out more

The value of mentoring

Are you a new entrant to farming or crofting and looking for support through the early growth-years of your business? The FAS Mentoring support connects you to an experienced and skilful mentor who can guide you through the vital set-up of your business.

If you are looking for general support or a mentor with specific experience such as, the food and drink industry, finance and business planning, biodiversity or animal welfare, the FAS will help you to identify the right mentor.

Carol Glennie from Whitemyre Farm worked with her mentor in 2023 and states that the support was an "incredibly helpful opportunity - having a

mentor has been the single most beneficial aspect to learning how to run the farm I inherited. I'm honestly not sure where I'd be without that mentor experience".

The feedback from mentees is very positive. 99% of participants who used the service would recommend it to others. 94% of mentees stated that they will implement all actions recommended by their mentor; and 98% rated the mentor's working practices as excellent or good.

To apply for mentoring support contact FAS at advice@fas.scot or **0300 323 0161**. More information can be found on the FAS website: www.fas.scot/advice-grants/.

Supporting grass-based decision making



Many are weighing up their grassland management plans at this time of year and, truth be told, it is nigh on impossible with so many variables. Traditionally, farmers might rely on previous years' practices or intuition. Feed budgeting may also help.

Feed budgeting is simply weighing up feed supply and animal demand. It is more challenging at grass but it still holds value. It involves estimating feed requirements for livestock and with grass measurements and estimated grass growth, helps predict surpluses or shortfalls.

For instance, estimates of animal requirements show that two and a half (700kg) cows per hectare in late pregnancy demand 22.8 kg of grass dry matter (DM) per day, whereas ten (70kg) ewes per hectare in late pregnancy require 17 kg DM. Say no animals are currently grazing the turnout area which has an average cover of 1600 kg DM/ha. Over 30 days, grass growth rates of 10 kg DM/ha could increase the farm's average cover to 1,900 kg DM/ha. Considering a minimum grazing height of 4cm, or 1500 kg DM/ha, this provides the herd with a 17.5-day potential supply without the subsequent grass growth.

Various software tools can integrate all these complex elements. Using FARMAX software using SAC Consulting's GrazeUp service, grass measurements alongside grass growth predictions and animal demand help identify shortfall or surplus opportunities. While no tool or method can completely eliminate the unpredictability of farming, they can help with decision-making confidence.

Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting

To read the full article online, please visit: www.fas.scot/article/agribusiness-march-2024-management-matters-grassland/

Free events

At the Farm Advisory Service we run a range of events both online and in-person.

Visit www.fas.scot/events to sign up or contact the advice line and we'll help you get booked on.

Preparing for Lambing - Skye Portree, 6th April, 10:30am - 2:30pm

Whether you are new to lambing or would like a refresher, join us for this half practical, half theory workshop where we will cover all things lambing. Topics will include colostrum, condition scoring, ewe nutrition, kit, hygiene and much more. We will also be practicing administering intraperaitoneal injections (IP).



Are robots for me?



With the ongoing problem of finding good reliable labour, dairy farmers are increasingly asking themselves; "Should I be looking at robots to milk my herd?"

Robots will 'harvest' the milk from the cow and do a very good job of it, but the cows still need daily attention. The twice (or thrice) daily contact with the cows, will be lost so you will have to rely on data generated by the robot to make informed decisions on udder health, bulling activity etc.

Ideally you need at least 2 people to share the alarm calls so that there is cover for holidays, nights out etc.

Fully housed AYR herds are more suited to robots although grazing gates along with good grassland management mean cows can be grazed successfully.

Poor mobility within a dairy herd will mean reduced visits to the robot so hoof care is a priority.

Think how you are going to handle breeding cows, sick cows, routine fertility visits by your vet and TB testing. Self-locking yokes are ideal for this.

Free access allows cows to express themselves naturally and do what they want whereas guided comes in 2 variations: milk first or feed first. Generally, guided traffic systems are more feed efficient and there are less 'fetch cows' to deal with.

Make sure you choose a manufacturer with good after sales service.

In conclusion, there are many very successful robotic systems that produce large amounts of milk successfully and that is down to understanding the principles of robotics and excellent attention to detail in management.

David Darlington, SAC Consulting



This article is part of the March edition of Milk Manager News. To read our full article and more, please visit: www.fas.scot/publication/milk-manager-news-march-2024/

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is funded by the Scottish Government, providing information and resources aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of farms and crofts. Grant support, a full programme of events, a subscription service for crofts and small farms, and a range of articles and publications form the core of this service which is designed to provide integrated advice for farmers and crofters across Scotland.



National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

If you need more advice on any topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on **0300 323 0161** or email advice@fas.scot. The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £1,200.

The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at www.fas.scot



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