

Planning For Profit – Howe Factsheet

Beef herd objectives	To run a beef herd that can be managed alongside arable operations Faster finishing of male and heifer calves at good weights Ease pressure on grass for grazing and silage Heifers now calving down at three, used to calf at two, however, it was problematic. Tighten calving period Provide FYM and slurry that boosts soil fertility and maintains soil structure
Herd structure	Commercial herd – 120 cows spring calving Aim to have mainly Simmental cross Limousin cows Cows go to Charolais and Simmental bulls Heifers go to Salers
Farm size	70ha owned and 130ha seasonal land. 60ha of Spring Barley 10ha of Spring Oats Total 490ac. (200Ha)
Bulls	Currently 4 bulls – 2 Charolais and 2 Simmental Bulls selected on health status and visual assessment
Bulling periods	Heifers – bulling period from 1 st April to calve Jan 2016 Cows – 12 week mating period from turnout
Calving	Calved inside from February to end of April
Weaning	House calves around 20 th October with cows for one week on calf creep. Calves then weaned 27 th October Creep feed in fields for eight weeks prior to housing.
Cows	Winter diet – silage plus straw Cull for undesirable characteristics – no second chances.
Bull Calves	First 28 male calves born, kept entire for bull beef.
Steer calves	Rest of male calves castrated and best sold off grass as forward stores through Orkney Auction Mart. The remainder are fattened and sold to McIntosh Donald.
Heifer calves	Retain 15 -20 best heifers as replacements, selected at 12 months old The others are finished and sold at Orkney Auction Mart or McIntosh Donald
Herd health	Members of Orkney Livestock Association. BVD accredited, Testing for Johnes (for last 7 years), Lepto and BVD vaccinated.
Sheep	Small flock of 75 ewes Go to Charolais, Texel and Kerry Hill rams Lamb mid April, lambing percentage 170% Lambs sold fat or store depending on their condition to OAM or McIntosh Donald.

Relative performance of bull beef enterprise at Howe

Bull Beef	Howe	QMS Average	QMS Top Third
Finish weight (kg lw)	@ 499kg today	657	660
Daily Liveweight Gain	1.56	1.5	1.9

Aim to have bulls away from March onwards.



Key points for discussion

- Can finishing cattle on cereal based system work for in the long-term?
- What are the main things you would need to do to achieve similar results in your own herd?
- What suggestions do you have for our host farmers?



Planning For Profit 11th February 2015

The Orkney Planning for Profit event was held courtesy of J & S Hay, Howe, Birsay on 11th February 2015. It was good spring day which helped with attendance almost 50 attendees from across the county arrived.

The day started with a tour of the unit, which is an example of a farm which has managed to successfully diversify into a good contracting business to allow three sons to come into the business. Marty Hay firstly explained the cereal enterprise on farm with the current policy of selling seed barley and oats as well as selling grain and bales around Orkney and up to Shetland. The contracting business was explained and the machinery was on display for everyone to see.



After this the tour moved on to look at the cattle with Stevie Hay explaining how the suckler cow enterprise had expanded over the years and the improvements that had been made to the buildings in recent years. The calving pens were of interest to lots of the attendees with it being set up for one man to be able to calf cows. It had been set up fairly simply and cheaply which everyone could appreciate.



The main part of the tour was the chance to see the bull beef that Stevie is trying for the first time. The bulls have been putting on 1.96kg per day in the last month. The bulls were looking really well, were peaceable and not too perturbed with 50 people turning up in their shed!



After the farm tour the group moved on to the local hall where we had some lunch, after the lunch we gave a Power Point presentation on the technical performance of Stevie's calves. We discussed



Stevie's decision to calve at three, not using EBV's and selling cattle at the age and weight he currently is.

Greening was mentioned as a particular concern to the business and the options that are open to Marty and Stevie was discussed at length. They have decided to set a field aside for fallow land, thus putting increasingly more pressure on the grass. Therefore the decision to feed home-grown cereals to finish cattle quicker seems even more sensible. The other advantage to selling bull beef in March-April was an injection of cash into the business at a traditionally lean time of year for a suckler cow herd.

The attendees were asked to fill a form detailing the good and bad aspects of the farm and business as they saw it on the day. The feedback is attached.

It was agreed by the majority of participants that the Hay's have succeeded at integrating their systems very well so one compliments the other i.e. work with the cows is timed to free up men for the contracting business.

Others thought that the simple system worked well and you don't need to complicate things to make a success of it.

One of the main messages that were taken away from the meeting was that the three brothers although they may not always agree, were able to bounce ideas off, challenge each other to perform better and always try to do better. It was touched upon that everyone needs this in their line of work in order to push the business forward.

