

# Case Study

## Giles Henry – Oakwood Mill, Scottish Borders



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**Giles farms Oakwood Mill in the Scottish Borders; a certified Organic beef farm.**

**The farm consists of 95ha cultivatable land which is grass plus forage crops and 110 ha hill area.**

**80 Luining cows, fattening all progeny off grass and forage by 25 months, half are sold before 19 months old.**

**As part of a profit share, Giles also finishes 45 Angus cross steers a year with another organic beef farmer.**

**Giles also provides grass measurements and samples as part of the [GrassCheck GB](#) programme.**

## 2020 highlights

100% scanning including first calvers and bulling heifers.

2019/20 feeding: 4t energy blocks, 260 bales of silage and 30 bales of hay

Cows calved within 48 days at 96% calving.

Finishing steers summer average growth rates 1.4kg/day on grass alone (the top batch were doing 2.2kg/day in the compensatory growth period from May-mid June).

## Approach to grazing management

### Rotational grazing

Six groups rotationally grazed: three bulling groups of cows/heifers, finishing steers, homebred steers, homebred yearling heifers. He prioritises youngstock on the younger grasses. In August, Giles took heaviest 15 angus steers (over 490kg) to run in front of the others to get the best grass hope to reach a 600kg target for sale at the end of October.

1 ha paddocks, stock moved every three days. The plan is 24 days rest to start, can tighten to 18 days (not during 2020!) and extends out to 27-30 days' rest in September.

Grazing height on entry is 1900 -2100 kg DM/ha (6-7cm) in Spring, later on the target pre entry cover is 2400 -2500 kg DM/kg (9-10cm) (only managed from mid-august in 2020). Aims to leave 1500 kg DM/ha (4-5cm).

### 2020 adaptations

With slow spring grass growth this year, the youngstock were going in to covers of 1800 -1900 kg DM/ha (5-6cm) which only kept them for one day. This meant that the rest period was much shorter than ideal (10days) but kept the cattle fed. Under set stocking, he would have had to feed them additional feed – the grass would've run out. This saw them through until May when the rain spurred on grass growth again.

He also, reduced silage ground by 2 ha for finishing cattle which enabled him to get finishing 20 steers away.

### The tools

One strand electric wire with poly posts. 4500 volts through the fencing with mains power round the farm.

Generally, uses one standard water trough to four paddocks or a micro bowl and umbilical pipes over the ground. This means that he puts in a forage crop or changes the paddock size, he can strip troughs out if needed.

## Managing pasture quality

Pre-mowing – if a lot of rejected patches building up, Giles will mow after they have been in the paddock for 2.5 days which gives them half a day to tidy up the cut material.

Encourages calves to creep graze by lifting wire on fences later in the season (August/September). This means the calves get the best leaf and the cows can graze the paddocks a bit tighter.

## Deferred grazing on hill

The cows go onto the hill from November to early March, after which they come back to the grazing platform for calving.

Giles makes sure the cows are fit by the end of the summer. They lose around 45kg on the hill so need to make sure they have enough fat cover to see them through.

Weaned calves go onto Kale or Swedes.

See Giles's Vlog Series [here](#).



For more from our Vloggers, please go to [Fas.scot/grassland](https://fas.scot/grassland). We thank them all for sharing their lessons and success stories through the 2020 grazing season. For more livestock and grassland management articles, factsheets, videos and podcasts, please see [fas.scot](https://fas.scot).