

Case Study

Jamie Leslie – Scholland Farm, Shetland



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Jamie Leslie farms Scholland farm on Shetland; a beef, sheep and cereal farm.

The farm totals 350 ha of which 90ha is dune land/rough grazing, 15ha is spring cereal, 22 ha are put into forage crops and the remainder is grass.

900 ewes and 200 hoggs are put to the tup, the flock is predominantly Texel, Lleyne and Romney with Suffolk used as the terminal sire.

90 Aberdeen Angus sucklers, progeny fattened by 19 months on average.

15ha spring cereals

2020 highlights

Twin lambs averaged 325g/day from birth to 90days

Calves weaned around 300kg at 205 days (growth rates averaged 1.3kg/day)

90% of hoggs made tuppung weight (60% of mature weight, 40-42kg)

Heifers calved for 6 weeks and cows for 9 weeks. 22 cows (3rd cycle) cows calved outside.

66% of cattle finished off grass by October. Rest inside to go after new year. Calves averaged 312kg carcass weight and average sale age is 19 months.

Spread 30% less fertiliser on grazing through better grass budgeting.

Weaned calves doing well on fodder beet in December, halving the usual feed cost indoors

Approach to grazing management

Rotational grazing

Pre-lambing rotation in Mid-March to lambing time, stocking density and supplementation dependant on grass cover. Jamie uses the Beef and Lamb NZ feedsmart app to understand stocking potential.

The stock are set stocked or indoors during lambing and calving.

Post lambing, there are three leader-follower rotations (ewes and lambs or growing cattle are followed by cows and calves to maintain quality). Each leader-follower rotation consists of eleven paddocks and the stock are moved every 1.5-2 days. Therefore, the paddock will be grazed over 3-4 days.

Biggest ewe mob is 250 ewes and lambs. Cattle groups will be up to 30 cows and calves or 60 bulling heifers and steers until bulling. After bulling, the steers are prioritised over the heifers for grazing quality. Jamie has found it is easier drawing slaughter cattle when kept in smaller mobs.

The leader-follower rotation is at a high stocking rate: 2.8 livestock units/ha. This is because the land cannot be mowed or topped. Therefore, he utilises a buffer area for grazing when grass growth slows. The buffer area then serves as part of the deferred grazing ground in the winter.

Post weaning (end July): lambs go on to silage aftermaths in batches. Aim to get all lambs away by mid-August (store or fat) as the weather into the autumn is unpredictable.

At tupping/flushing: the ewes are on the rotational grazed ground until going onto fodder beet.

Cows on deferred grazing through the winter, moved every 3-7 days depending on fencing practicality.

2020 adaptations

Slow spring grass growth meant Jamie had to put ewes and lambs onto rough winter grazing to let the main grazing platform recover.

Nitrogen fertiliser more precise due to Famax data.

Post-weaning, there was a surplus of grass, so he grazed weaned calves for a month pre-housing.

The tools

For the sheep rotations, Jamie uses three wire electric fencing which is mains powered. He sets up a lot of fencing and has installed plastic troughs with underground piping in each paddock so he doesn't have to move equipment. These fences are in place for nine months of the year.

For the growing cattle land, he uses kiwitech microtroughs with surface pipes because he sometimes cuts this land and will need to move the troughs. The cattle-only rotations are fenced with a single wire and geared reels.

For gateways, Jamie either pins the wires to ground and make them walk over it or, in the leader-follower system he has designed electric fence gateways. He has alkathene pipe bent in a semi-circle in front of the quad so he can drive over the fences.

On sandy, well drained soils, he needed a robust earth so has buried a galvanised gate.

An important tool is a good tester with fault finder, he advocates testing routinely!

See Jamie'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.