

News from the Farm Advisory Service:



FAS TV - Genetics for the Future & Marshall's Farm Shop

Recently on FAS TV on episode 17, we visited Willie Mackay in Caithness to hear all about the artificial insemination services he is providing to farmers across the country.

In episode 18, we headed out to Marshall's Farm Shop in Aberdeenshire to hear how Shona Marshall and her two sisters run a successful farm shop and restaurant with emphasis on farm gate to plate produce.

Find our YouTube channel by using the QR code or the link below
www.youtube.com/FASscot



Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) Deadlines

All work must be completed
by 31st December 2024

All claims must be submitted
by end of February 2025

The benefits of good ventilation

Many businesses have housed dairy cattle earlier this winter due to extended periods of wet weather, poached fields, limited grazing and variable temperatures. Protecting the herd from the elements shouldn't be the only consideration when it comes to housing. The airspace within a shed will have a significant impact on animal health and productivity. There are three fundamental factors that should be controlled by ventilation within a shed: -

1. Fresh air, that is as free from bacteria, dust and gases produced by cattle as possible. Ammonia levels over 25ppm will aggravate mucous membranes and the respiratory tract, making livestock more vulnerable to respiratory diseases.
2. Excess moisture can harbour viruses and bacteria which can increase the risk of infection transmission and increase the prevalence of pneumonia and mastitis.
3. Draughts should be controlled by ventilation. Excessive air speeds around livestock will increase discomfort and the rate at which body heat is lost. In colder months calves will use more energy to maintain their body temperature, this directs energy away from growth and building their immune system. The lower critical temperature (LCT) is the temperature below which a calf requires extra energy to stay warm. A calf between 0 and 3 weeks of age has a LCT of 10-15°C and a calf over three weeks old has a LCT of 5-10°C.

To maintain good growth rates in calves throughout the winter months the following could be adopted:

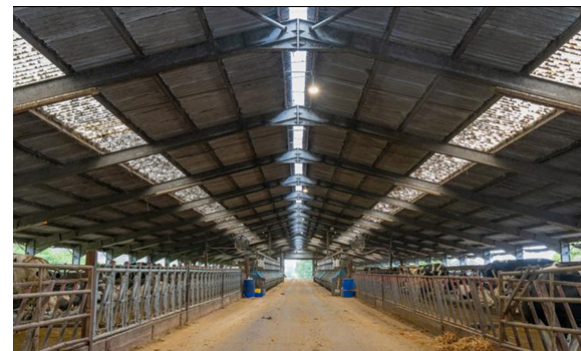
- Dry newborn calves to reduce heat loss
- Use a max/min thermometer at calf height to monitor the shed temperature
- Ensure the shed has good drainage to reduce dampness
- Use calf jackets if the temperature drops below 15°C

A well-ventilated shed will pull fresh, clean air in and push out stale air which contains bacteria, dust and moisture whilst avoiding draughts. This movement of air is driven by thermal buoyancy, commonly known as the 'stack effect'. The stack effect occurs when heat generated by cattle warms the air, which causes the air to rise.

If there is insufficient outlet, the warm air will fail to escape the shed, cooling before falling back down onto bedding, increasing the moisture content and providing the ideal environment for bacteria to flourish.

If there is insufficient inlet, there won't be enough cool, fresh air drawn into the shed. Warm air will rise more slowly, giving it time to cool before reaching the outlet, allowing pathogens and water to stay in the shed.

A cow requires 0.1m² of ridgeline outlet and growing cattle and calves require 0.04m² of outlet, the area of required inlet is double that of the outlet (0.2m²/cow and 0.08m²/calf). Very young, small calves will not generate enough body heat for the stack effect to work. Mechanical ventilation such as a fan and tube system would be more practical in a calf house.



An example of good ventilation with adequate inlets on either side of the building and a wide outlet in the ridge.

Keira Sannachan, SAC Consulting

Further information can be found in our full article at:
www.fas.scot/article/mmn-november-2024-the-benefits-of-good-ventilation/

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.

Sustainable Sheep Systems - Consumer & Animal Health

Online, 17th December, 7:00pm - 8:00pm

The Cow of the Future Part 4 - Designing the Future Cow

Online, 21st January, 7:30pm - 8:30pm

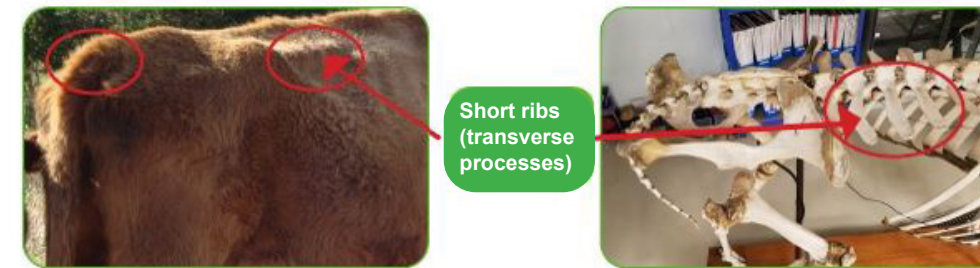
Body condition scoring in suckler cows

Body Condition Scoring (BCS) is a useful tool that farmers can use and is the best guide to the correct feeding of suckler cows. With practice it should only take around 10 seconds per cow to carry out. It estimates the energy reserves of the animal and should be done regularly at key stages in the production cycle (calving, housing, weaning etc.) BCS can help to make informed decisions throughout the year.

Ensuring that cows are at the right body condition means:

- Efficient use of feed/supplemented feed is not given to cows that don't need it.
- Reduced risk of calving difficulties associated with very lean or overweight cows.
- Better calf vigour at birth and improved growth until weaning.
- Improved fertility, making it easier to get the cow pregnant again.

Cows can sometimes look fatter or leaner than they really are. Using your hands rather than your eye to condition score is the best way to get an accurate assessment of condition. Place your hand on the ends of the short ribs. Feel the amount of fat between the skin and bones.



Cows are in GOOD body condition if you can feel the bones but there is a substantial layer of fat between the skin and bones.

If the cow is LEAN:

- The ends of the short ribs will feel sharp
- There will be a deep cavity at the tail head and the pelvis can be felt with little or no fat under the skin

If the cow is FAT:

- It will not be possible to feel the bones of the short ribs even with firm pressure
- The tail head will be filled with fat and the pelvis cannot be felt

Condition scoring top tips:

- Aim for fit and not fat.
- Body condition score 2.5-3.5 for calving.
- Avoid sudden, rapid changes in condition.
- Cows in poor body condition pre-calving take longer to get back in calf.
- Monitor condition throughout year.

Cat MacGregor, SAC Consulting

Further information can be found in our full article at:

www.fas.scot/article/body-condition-scoring-suckler-cows/

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service is funded by the Scottish Government. It is delivered by SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College, and Ricardo Energy and Environment.

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 £2,000.

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