



## AGRISCOT 2015 SILAGE COMPETITION WINNERS

The 2015 silage season started with lots of promise in April, but over the next six weeks the weather conditions conspired to reduce the chances of producing quality silage.

However, the entries for the Agriscot 2015 silage competition have again shown what can be achieved, even when the weather conditions appear to be against quality silage production. Indeed, for the first cut clamp silages, the average dry matter and ME was only slightly lower than 2014.

It was a close call, with silage entries from all over the country, but this year all the silage class winners came from Dumfries and Galloway. Maybe reflecting a slight advantage in cutting conditions compared with other regions.

The first cut clamp section was won by the Ramsay family from Lodge of Kelton, Castle Douglas with a quality sample that took the eye of the judge, Mr Hugh McClymont of the Crichton Royal Farm, Dumfries. This sample had a dry matter of 34.6%, a ME of 12.1, and an excellent protein of 15.9. This first cut sample was cut on the 24th May and lifted on the 26th May. The Ramsays are using this quality ration to feed to their 140 cows, which are averaging 10396 litres per lactation, with a butter fat of 4.33 and a Protein of 3.28.

The big bale section winner was the Watson team from High Mark, Stranraer, who beat their second placing in 2014 to come top for this year's competition. It was turnabout as the Morris family from Greengate House Farm, Waterbeck, Lockerbie, who were first last year came second this year.

The Watsons use this quality big bale silage as a buffer feed for their paddock grazed dairy herd from August to mid-October, being fed at two bales per day to 130 cows. The Watsons have a total dairy herd of 150 cows with an average lactation yield of 6800 litres, butter fat of 4.4, and a protein of 3.7.

Their forage plan is to clamp all the first cut silage, after this fifteen acres is set aside to be cut every four weeks as big bale silage. The yield per cut averages at six bales per acre, with each bale weighing approximately 850kg. The sample entered for this year's competition was cut on the 1st September.

The Young Farmer silage competition is now into its second year, its aim is to encourage the younger members of the farm to come forward. The well-deserved winner this year was Michael Yates of East Logan Farm, Castle Douglas, with a storming silage quality of a 30% dry matter and a ME of 12.1, just beating his cousin, Kirsty Yates of Meikle Firthhead, maybe the difference being Michael cutting four days earlier. East Logan farm has 270 cows with an average lactation yield of 11700, a butter fat of 3.97 and a protein of 3.2. In total, the farm consists of 365 acres. This silage is used as part of a ration to produce maintenance, plus 35 litres.

I would like to thank Mr Hugh McClymont for giving his experience in judging the silage samples; it is not an easy task with the quality that is presented to him for judging. Also thanks to the Crichton Royal Farm, Dumfries for the use of their facilities, which makes the collection and storage of the silage samples so much easier.



1st cut clamp silage section winners; Robert, Ginger, Robert, Hamish & Jim Ramsay of Lodge of Kelton, Castle Douglas.



Big bale silage section winners; John & David Watson of High Mark, Leswalt, Stranraer.



Young farmer silage section winner; Michael Yates, East Logan, Castle Douglas.



## INVESTMENT IN RESEEDING PAYS DIVIDENDS AT LILBURN ESTATE, NORTHUMBERLAND.

Lilburn is a 30,000 acre estate in North Northumberland, half of which is hill ground. The remaining acreage is made up of an arable rotation, including the production of grass and forage crops for their extensive beef and sheep enterprises.

### BEEF ENTERPRISE

Of the 1800 suckler cows, 500 are pure breed Stablisser and the rest are crossed Stablisers. Cows are of a 650-700kg weight, mainly crossed with Stablisser bulls, Aberdeen Angus and a few Charolais. All the male calves are finished as bulls at 355kgs having been weaned at 6 months. Good silage is at the heart of their winter ration.

'It is absolutely fundamental to the success of all the livestock operations here at Lilburn that we have both good grazing and good silage. We are a big farm at Lilburn and with that comes many benefits, not least economies of scale. However, large farms can also miss the attention to detail that is the backbone of the family farm, and so I am obsessive that we always have a keen eye for that detail and that we don't use those economies of scale as a 'get out of jail' card. A business of this size has massive fixed costs and so the Stablisser as a breed really helps here as I am able to run 350 suckler cows per stockman, keep labour costs down and make a profit out of the beef enterprise. Our approach to both reseeding and silage making follows the same principles. Both are expensive operations so why compromise on quality; the grass seeds we put in the ground are the very best and I know that every mouthful of grass, whether it's grazed or eaten as silage is the very best of quality. The cattle fertility is a reflection of that with both autumn and spring suckler cows consistently achieving conception rates of 95%. It's not just the quality of Watson's seeds that keeps me going back, but also the inhouse backup from all Johnny's team.' Dominic Naylor.



Dominic Naylor Estate Manager, inspecting a crop ready for first cut.

### SHEEP

The sheep enterprise at Lilburn comprises of 12,500 ewes, the bulk being Scottish Blackies and remaining 5,000 lowland sheep mainly Scotch Mule and North Country Cheviot. The Roseden Pedigree Suffolk flock completes the picture. The establishment of a considerable acreage of young grass over the last few years has had a dramatic effect on sheep production, complimented with an annual acreage of a couple of hundred acres of kale and one hundred odd acres of stubble turnips drilled after the harvest.



1200 lambs strip grazing stubble turnips in November 2015.

### SILAGE

Lilburn operates a two cut silage system with Dundas proving to be the key mixture delivering yield persistency and quality. With 20,000 tonnes to produce they start the first cut 20th May and complete the operation around the 10th June. Second cut is taken 6 weeks later. They are very particular about delivering high quality silage to help deliver animal performance in a cost effective manner.

A typical analysis is as follows:

#### Dundas mixture silage analysis - Lilburn 2015 First cut sample - crop harvested 3rd week of May

Analysis (Dry Matter)		Result
Dry Matter	%	32.1
Crude Protein	%	14.4
D Value	%	75.8
ME	MJ/kg	12.1
pH		4.2
Sugars	%	4.5



WATSON SEEDS

## SPRING CONFERENCE 2016 "Grass - your best investment"

Wednesday 17th February (approx 10am-3pm)  
New Lanark Hotel, South Lanarkshire

As part of our first spring conference, Watson Seeds are delighted to present three leading industry experts to discuss one of your most valuable assets; grass and its management. We hope that this, coming together of grassland farmers, who are looking to maximise the potential from grass, will leave with practical knowledge and experience that can be applied to their own farms to enhance production and efficiencies.

### OUR SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

**Nuffield Scholar; Robert Neill from Upper Nisbet, Jedburgh.**



Robert, a former Scotch Beef Farmer of the Year and winner of the Future Farming Award in 2013, focusses on the value of young grassland and how it contributes to increase farm productivity. Robert will share his practical experiences of having

successfully reclaimed unimproved hill grazing on Upper Nisbet and how this has undoubtedly helped efficiencies and returns.

**From an Irish perspective we shall hear from Dr Mary McEvoy.**



A respected grassland expert from Germinal. Our Irish cousins have a unique perspective to grassland management and production that we can undoubtedly learn a lot from. Dr McEvoy worked for 6 years as a Grassland Researcher for Teagasc, Moorepark, where her research interests included grass variety testing, examining the effect of variety and sward type on animal performance and the Pasture Profit Index. In 2014 Dr McEvoy joined Germinal. Dr McEvoy will demonstrate and discuss the importance of measuring grass growth and will describe the Pasture Profit Index, an interesting development in grass variety

evaluation in Ireland that ranks varieties in economic terms, to simplify the selection of grass varieties.

**Hugh McClymont from the SRUC's Crichton Royal farm in Dumfries.**



Hugh will need little introduction to many of you and is a former winner of the Dairy Farmer of the Year title. Dairy farming is undoubtedly under pressure currently and we will all be enthusiastic to learn how maximising grassland production in Hugh's experience has a significant part to play in improving productivity. Not just for the dairy farmer, we see that the skills and experience in grass production should be recognised and are transferable to all grassland farming enterprises.

All welcome.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Please contact us on 01368 840655 or [enquiries@watsonseeds.com](mailto:enquiries@watsonseeds.com) to register your interest and receive further information. There are limited spaces so to avoid disappointment please contact us asap.



# RSABI GREAT GLEN CHALLENGE



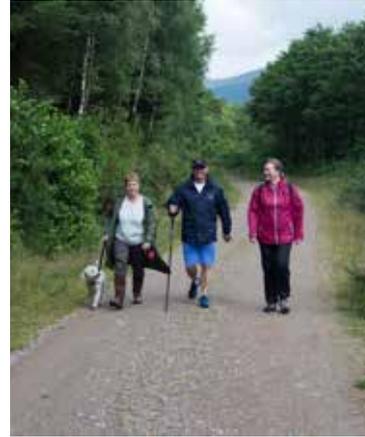
Team Watson Seeds at the starting line just before Mark set off on his bike ride.

Well we did it!! We completed the RSABI Great Glen Challenge and raised over £2600 for this great charity. This goes towards a fantastic total of over £60,000 raised from this event.

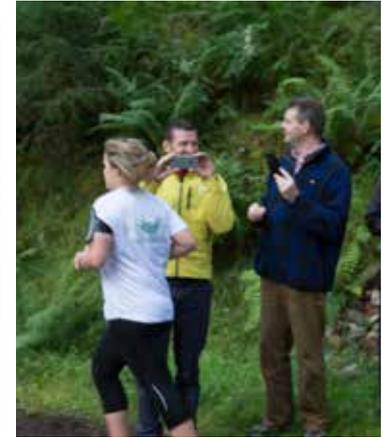
Nina Clancy, chief executive of RSABI said: "We host this challenge each year to continue to boost the funds of RSABI in order to offer more people who have worked on the land the support they need through their toughest times. We believe that there are 3000 people in farming who are surviving on less than 9k each year, and we hope to double the number of people we can help through these efforts. The generosity of the people who compete in and support challenges like this is invaluable"

hail showers that were forecast for the afternoon didn't materialise! Johnny managed to get the best of the weather when walking along the river.

We finished an impressive 9th out of the 25 teams that entered, which we thought was a great achievement when some of the competitors should be trying out for the Olympics next year in Rio!



Johnny coming to the end of his 12km observational walk. He had a lovely time talking to these ladies.



Lyndsey starting her 18km run, she was happy to have finished it and not have come last!

We would like to thank everyone that sponsored and supported us. Now to get training for next year!!



Mark at the finish line after a gruelling 28kms. Mark finished 5th adding to Watson Seeds points.



Andrew ready for his sprint finish, winning bronze for Team Watson Seeds.



Team Watson Seeds (minus Mark) at Neptune's Staircase - the finishing line!

If you would like to help RSABI help rural people in need, please visit [www.rsabi.org.uk](http://www.rsabi.org.uk) for more information on how to become a supporter.

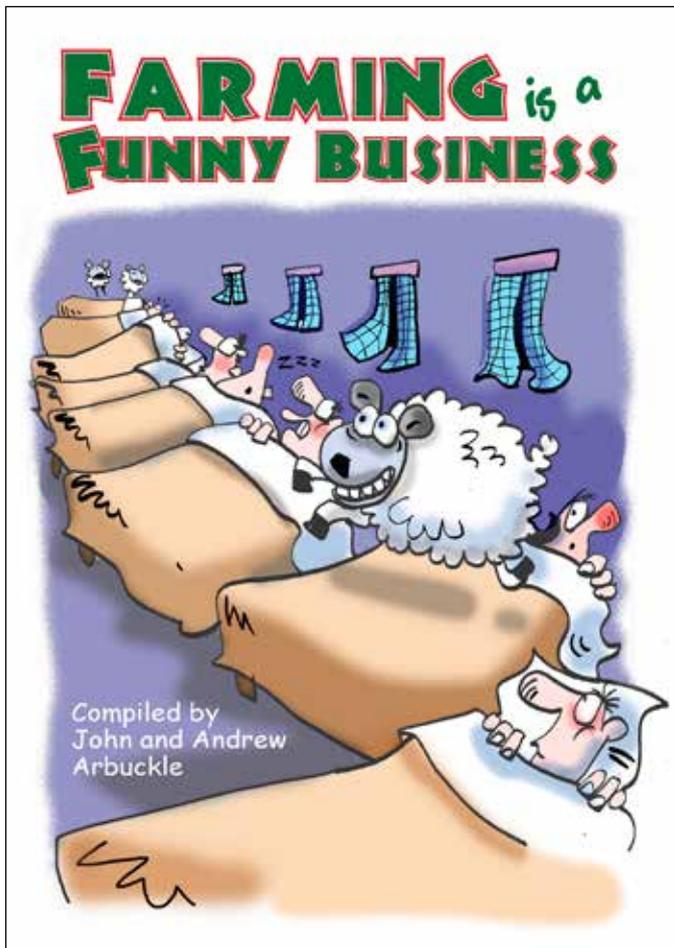
On the day the Scottish summer weather proved to make things a bit more challenging at times with very heavy rain showers for Mark on the bike and Andrew when he set off on his kayak. Then Lyndsey had a lovely strong headwind when running along the canal. Although thankfully the





## DON'T GET STUCK FOR CHRISTMAS IDEAS

### COMEDY BOOK RAISING FUNDS FOR RURAL CHARITY



Anyone scratching their head for novel Christmas shopping ideas will welcome the publication of a new collection of comic rural stories gleaned from across Scotland.

The book, *Farming is a Funny Business*, has been compiled by well-known journalist and author Andrew Arbuckle and his brother John, and contains anecdotes and jokes about the trials and tribulations of everyday rural life. As an additional bonus all proceeds are being given to Scotland's rural charity, RSABI.

Copies are available from RSABI directly and cost £10, plus postage and packing.

Nina Clancy, RSABI chief executive, said:

'Christmas shopping can be a headache at the best of times, and we all know someone who is especially difficult to buy a present for. Thankfully Andrew and John Arbuckle have come to the rescue with their super collection of funny farming anecdotes.

'RSABI is enormously grateful to Andrew and John for their hard work in putting this book together, and to all those who contributed their jokes and tales. Farming is a *Funny Business* deserves to sell well in its own right, but I am always heartened that people are willing to help RSABI raise money in innovative ways.

'Rural life can be tough, and RSABI helps hundreds of people each year who are working or have worked on the land - and their dependants - and face difficulties due to illness, stress or financial strain. Whether you buy this book for yourself or as a present, you'll be delighting someone and supporting a good cause at the same time.'

Andrew Arbuckle said: 'Whether you're stuck for a Christmas present or just want a diversion from the toils and troubles on the farm, *Farming is a Funny Business* provides the answer.

'With over 300 jokes and anecdotes from contributors all over Scotland, it will surely dispel the view that farmers are dour and uncommunicative, and equally it will remove the thought that farming has a monopoly on pessimism.

'For city dwellers, it would also be a welcome present to that neighbour, uncle, aunt or other relation who keeps talking about farming, and it has the added benefit in that it can be sneakily read before being wrapped up in Christmas paper.

'Some of the humour is pawky and a lot of it is dry and understated; there may not be a lot of 'laugh out loud' moments but it provides proof there is a lot of fun in the farmyard, at auction sales and agricultural shows; in fact wherever farming folk meet.'

To order a copy of the book or enquire about local stockists please call 0131 472 4166, e. [rsabi@rsabi.org.uk](mailto:rsabi@rsabi.org.uk) or write to RSABI, Rural Centre, West Mains, Ingliston, Newbridge, EH28 8LT. [www.rsabi.org.uk](http://www.rsabi.org.uk).



Supporter Scheme 2015



Fond to support RSABI



## THE COST EFFECTIVE FIX FOR POACHED AND DAMAGED GRASS

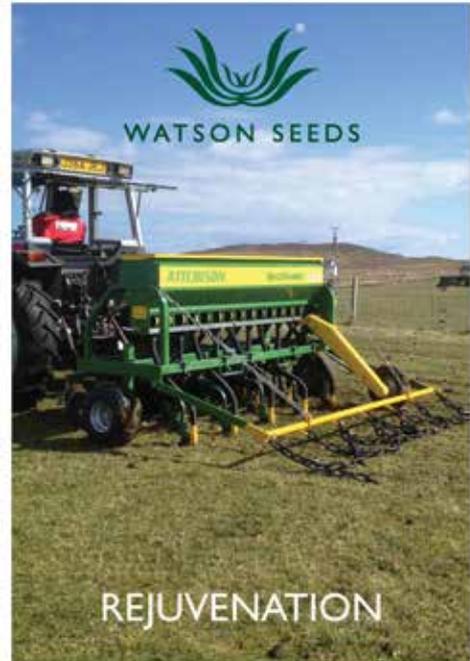
There were massive variations in rainfall throughout our various geographical regions in 2015. Needless to say the wetter areas have suffered from poaching and general damage to grass swards. This can bring about premature deterioration of good productive grass as the exposed bare earth can all too often be colonised by weed species or indigenous grass species rendering the field much less productive. A good proportion of this threat can be averted if the damaged sward is rejuvenated early next spring.

A speedy and cost effective pasture repair operation has a number of benefits for the long term future of the damaged grass:

- 1 Increase animal production from the sward
- 2 Minimise establishment of weeds
- 3 Ensure fertiliser applied is feeding only worthwhile species of grass and clover
- 4 Prolong the productive life of the field

There is now a wide variety of pasture repair machinery available throughout most areas of the country via contractors and machinery rings. The rejuvenation operation does require some thought and planning in order

to achieve the best results. We would recommend you study our rejuvenation booklet which covers the subject comprehensively.



Please call the office on 01368 840655 for your copy or visit our website [www.watsonseeds.com](http://www.watsonseeds.com) and download the booklet from our technical library page.



An open day highlighting the benefits of overseeding was organised by the SRUC team in conjunction with Watson Seeds at Clachan Sands, North Uist by kind permission of Donald John MacDonald.

'The event was very well received and it clearly highlighted the role rejuvenation can play in maintaining a productive grass sward. The variety of different seed mixes which were available was also of great interest and with that the importance of selecting the most appropriate mix for the growing conditions of the croft and the intended use,' Angus Ferguson, SAC Agricultural Consultant.

George Simon, from Suffolk, kindly brought his Aitchison drill to demonstrate on North Uist.

Our grass mixtures are now available through Carnan Stores on Benbecula.



## SHEEP PADDOCK GRAZING ON THE ISLE OF BUTE

Ian and John Dickson, Scalpsie Farm, Rothesay, Isle of Bute.

During the grass growing season 2015 the Dicksons, John and son Ian of Scalpsie Farm, Isle of Bute, started a paddock grazing system in a twenty three acre field of Duart plus clover. Scalpsie farm is made up of 1100 acres of mainly grass swards, carrying 134 spring calving suckler cows and 990 ewes.

Ian and John Dickson were attracted to the principle of paddock grazing by a number of factors. These were:

- Highest grass production and use per ha
- Provides very high quality feed 11-12ME
- Higher stocking rates can be sustained
- More even manure distribution
- Weeds can be controlled through grazing
- Reduced need for conserved forage by extending the grazing season

However, they were also aware that this system would require careful monitoring of grass growth and that there would also be costs involved with fencing and water requirements.

On the 1st of May of 2015 a two year old twenty three acre field of Duart was divided up into four paddocks, using electric fencing, with each paddock being approximately six acres in size. The aim was to turn the Mule ewes and Texel lambs into each paddock when the grass growth was 2500kg/ha and to remove the sheep once the grass was grazed to 1200-1500kg/ha.



One of the fenced off paddocks with a number of sheep and ewes.

The system worked well with an average stocking density of 8.69 ewes per acre, but as expected the stocking rate was very dependant on the grass growth. During the cooler months the stocking rate dropped to seven ewes per acre. On average the ewes grazed each paddock for five days before they were moved on to the next paddock.

An expected problem of worms with this high stocking rate was not an issue, as faecal tests showed a lower egg count on the paddock grazed sheep than the conventional grazed animals. Ian and Dad John are not sure why this is the case; one theory is the ewes are not grazing too low in the sward and therefore not grazing worm contaminated ground.



John Dickson standing in one of the fenced off paddocks

Another advantage of the paddock grazing for Ian and John was the flexibility to allocate relatively small areas of grass for silage or hay, where grass growth has exceeded livestock requirements, although during 2015 this was not necessary.

To confirm that this system was working in their favour, Ian and John weighed 10% of the paddock grazed lambs after twenty eight days and discovered that these lambs were weighing 1.5 kilos better than the conventionally grazed lambs.

Regarding fertiliser, 50 kg of CAN was applied on the 1st of April, followed by another 50kg of CAN on the 1st May. Due to the intensity of grazing, it would appear that fertiliser use can be minimised as dung and urine are concentrated into a small area.

Next year John and Ian are planning to undertake the same paddock system, but with more fertiliser applied.



## IN 2016 WE ARE CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF PREMIUM PERFORMANCE SEED



## NEW WEBSITE

Our new website is fully up and running! We have all the information you will need to know about our mixtures and the First Choice varieties that go into them.

There is also a technical library section where you can find out more information about how to select, prepare soil for, and sow our various grass and crop seeds and mixtures, plus more. We will be updating our website throughout the year with more technical information



You can also download our various catalogues, information booklets and newsletters from the website.

Go check it out!

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