Milk Markets; a forward look

David Keiley, SAC Dairy Consultant gave a presentation on the state of the milk markets and the industry as things stand. David gave his interpretation of where he saw the milk market going over the next 12 months and more importantly, what impact this would have on the milk price.

With a number of different milk suppliers in the group of farmers present and the opportunity to change supplier limited due lack of choice or opportunity, around half of the farmers at the meeting were left with the only option of making the best of the contract they were currently on. With approximately 50% of the group on aligned milk contracts and 50% on other contracts there was very much a split in the group regarding milk supplier contract opportunities and the outlook for the foreseeable future.

Those farmers not on an aligned contract were very much grateful for the ‘new kids on the block’ who had recently expanded their milk buying enterprises and had come into Scotland and picked up the majority of suppliers who had recently lost their milk buyer. This had prevented a number of dairy farmers in Scotland facing some difficult decisions in recent months and allowed them to continue trading.

Time will tell if David’s predictions come close to reality.
**Update on the new calf shed at Hillend**

SAC Vet Lorna McPherson discussed the new calf shed which had just completed its first winter in operation. Host Ross Logan was pleased with its performance and it was proving a successful and cost effective addition to the business.

**Best practice for growing heifer calves**

Lorna explained the targets to be achieved regarding successful heifer rearing. Lorna stated that the key to successfully calving heifers at 24 months was to achieve the target growth rates. This led to a good debate with many of the farmers challenging the target rates set by Lorna. However those farmers in attendance that were achieving this target age of calving were happy with the performance of these heifers in the milking herd and were confident that they would stick with the target of calving heifers at 24 months old. How does your herd compare?

**Compaction; remedy and reduce to meet target yields**

SAC Consulting’s Soil Specialist Bill Crooks followed up his presentation from the January 2016 meeting, looking at farm soil condition and its impact on crop and grass growth. The group looked at soil profiles and soil pits for evidence of compaction using the VESS guide (*Visual Evaluation of Soil Structure*). There were three different mechanical tools to improve soil structure and alleviate soil compaction evaluated by Bill, when to use them and under what conditions they would do the best job. **Understanding your own soils and what options were suitable for your conditions** were two of the key messages that were taken from this presentation and discussion.

There are nine climate change focus farms in Scotland. Keep up to date with their activities at

![Facebook](facebook.png) ![Twitter](twitter.png)

www.farmingforabetterclimate.org

Meetings are free to attend and all farmers are welcome.

For Hillend, contact farm facilitator James Buchanan on 01738 636 611 or via email at james.buchanan@sac.co.uk for more information.

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